

Art by Michael Orozco

I've been around friends of deception that's why my attitude became haughty. I've seen many people return after being released. I just can't fall into that return category. It's too many opportunities out there. And freedom is the best thing anyone can have.

check out the rest of Lil' Toot's POW on page 10



We have less than a couple hours before we head off to do our Tuesday night workshops in Alameda County Juvenile Hall and SF/YGC, this editor is in a rush and needs some support to get the ed note up, and who does one turn to but the legendary Poetic Prisoner aka Will Roy, who has been sharing his thoughts on paper and in the community for many years through The Beat Within, once as a participant (SF/YGC and many years in CYA), but today as a full on reliable colleague and good friend. Take it away brother Will (B Sure)!

On hot San Francisco (Bay Area) days like these, a person like me spends his time appreciating freedom and what it means to triumph over an adversary such as incarceration. When I walk to the corner store on a fifteen-minute break, I'm reminded of the days I spent with my stomach touching my back waiting for the cases of Ramens I ordered on canteen (commissary). Or when I'm talking on the phone, I often daze off to the days where every other sentence was interrupted by an annoying prerecorded voice that said 'This is a call from an inmate at the California Youth Authority' or 'you have 60 seconds left on this call'. And even when I'm using the restroom, I can recall the days when I was in the county having to sit on the toilet in front of the whole pod like I was doing stand up comedy.

My most hated memories keep me inspired by giving me something to compare my current situation with. I look at where I am now and think about all the things I've gone through to get here. And in my quest to live a better life I've learned that each gain has to be appreciated, otherwise I'll lose sight of what's best for me. And right now what's best for me is not to focus on all the wrong that has been done to me or to make myself the victim, it's to push pass the mountain that has brought people to their knees so many times before. The mountain that always looks higher going up than coming down.

It's so soothing coming down a mountain, being able to reflect on what you saw on the way up — learning the cracks and loose rocks so that it would be that much easier for you when it came time to walk down. And as you're walking down, it's funny how people treat you. They assume you'll be climbing the same mountain forever, so when they see you walking down with a smile on your face after accomplishing such a colossal feat, they wonder why you're so happy, expecting you to be the mountain man for the rest of your days.

Well, I hate to break it to those people but my mountain days are over. I occasionally reach minor bumps in the road, but nothing I can't handle. I've grown tired of people pitying me for things I brought upon myself. And moreover, am tired of trying to find reasons why I'm so messed up in the head. I guess I'll just be content in being crazy and run with it.

Naw, but seriously though, freedom is lovely. I'm about to get off parole in a month and a half after giving them almost ten years of my life — I can't wait. I'm thinking about going to Vegas for the first time ever — we'll see. That's what life is supposed to be about — enjoying ourselves. Most of us have struggled too much in life to just keep on struggling. I firmly believe in balance. We can't all have messed up lives forever.

They would like us to though, we are paychecks for a lot of people in this world. Criminals are a resource. Me and a few of my friends have given some people some really good lives and all at our expense. But you can't put a price on experience. I've been locked up for six years straight in a place where your ability to observe and analyze people was your only means of survival. A place where a false judgment could cost you six months of your life. Don't you think I can sniff out people with hidden agendas? You know, people who on the surface have your best interest at heart, yet wouldn't even talk to 'your kind of people' if they didn't have to in order to receive a paycheck.

These people make me sick, so disconnected, yet so in control of what goes on with my livelihood. But even this I take with a grain of salt and keep pushing because no matter what happens I know I've already been through the worst and all these other things I'm going through now are that much easier to deal with.

Especially now that I'm responsible for putting The Beat Without section together. I really have to give it up to those putting it down back there. To most people, it's just where convicts are voicing their opinions and beliefs. But to me, it's so much more than that. Most often The Beat Without section is like repenting right before you're about to hit the gate. You've got some guys that aren't ever going to get out again still trying

to reach the younger generation and we are there only platform to do so. That's powerful.

It's powerful to me because it plays on people's stereotypes. Off top, society feels like those who are in jail are the bad apples and people out here are handling business. Well, the most compassionate people I know are authors in The Beat Without — people who don't have to do nothing but time still trying to reach out to the young ones because they genuinely care while people out here are so caught up in the routine of daily life that they go a whole day without doing something for someone else — a self-perpetuating cycle of me, me, me.

You BWO writers are the backbone of The Beat. You are the ones who keep the faith even though we don't see you at all. We paint pictures for each other through words and that's the only visuals we get from each other. And lately we've been having some new writers step up big and give us something to think about. It's always nice to get new writers putting it down in The Beat because that's how we know we're expanding.

We get people hating on The Beat so much that it's nice to know we're welcomed by those that really matter. And it's a shame, but people from Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties can't even take part in the invaluable knowledge that these older guys are giving because for some reason some people think what we're doing does more harm than good.

How can that be? All we're doing is bridging the gap between places that normally wouldn't be reached. And as we're bridging the gap are finding that a bridge has been needed for a long time. People who are criticizing The Beat fail to realize how hungry their young people are for information that they can actually utilize. Not that from a book for someone who ain't never been through anything. They need information from those who've been where they are and are where they're going. Like Dave says, "People are scared to hear the truth" especially a truth as brutal as ours.

So for those who are afraid, please don't be. We're all just trying to learn from each other so we can live better lives. Sure, there are those who don't take The Beat seriously, but that shouldn't ruin something priceless for those who are actually utilizing this as a way to stay away from a life of crime.

And for those who take part in this week in and week out. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. For if nobody else is reading your pieces, which we know they are. Just know that I'm reading your stuff and each time I do it makes it that much easier for me to be content in having to climb a mountain knowing I'm smiling the whole way down.

Well said Will, thank you.

Now for the topics at hand... First topic discussed, the very oh too but shouldn't be familiar "Funerals" —With the murder death rate in California being so high, funerals have become a common experience in the Bay Area. The sad thing is that so many of the victims are between the ages of 16 and 25 — which puts a lot of young people in the position of attending funerals and mourning the loss of loved ones. If you have attended such a funeral, how did it affect you? Have you been to more than one? Has your reaction changed over time with repetition? What do you do to prepare yourself to attend funerals like this? What do you do afterwards to unwind?

Second topic, "Uncomfortable" — No matter how we've been raised, what we have seen or done, who we hang with, we all at one time or another have found ourselves in a place and/or in a situation where we feel real uneasy. This week The Beat Within wants you to write about the places and/or a time when you felt most uncomfortable. What were you uncomfortable about? Tell us your thoughts, your fears and concerns that came with this uncomfortable feeling.

Last topic, "If You Had Anybody's Phone Number, Who Would You Call And Why?"

Moving right along, lets give a shout out to our POW (Piece Of the Week) writers, they are Big Vic, two from David, Lil' Naudie Bo, Wayne, two from Lady T, Young Shorty, Diego, Alicia, Lil' Man Man, Lil' Toot and Evans all from the 150 Crew. From Marin Dominic writes three and last but not least Bj from SF/YGC. Thank you writers for sharing your truths with us all.

This fabulous issue goes out to all teachers in our community. We hope you all are having a wonderful summer vacation, you all deserve it! Speaking of teachers, us Beat facilitators will be taking next week off over the fourth of July to rest up for the second half of this fabulous eleventh year. See you in a couple weeks friends! Best to you all!

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Counselor's Corner

From The Beat: Over the years, Mr. Booth, of 150 Crew (Alameda County, staff), has written many pieces for The Beat Within, some moving, some entertaining, some inspiring, but all educational and motivational. Now he is leaving the San Francisco Bay Area to be near his dying father and ailing mother, both of whom need him nearby — so that's where he will be. Though he will have a job of greater authority, he will be working for less pay. But those of you who feel everything of value in this world can be measured by money, need to read this farewell piece by Mr. Booth, who guarantees you happiness if you can absorb the wisdom he offers in this piece. We wish him the best in his new setting and hope he continues to keep in contact with us. Listen and learn.

Leaving You AlaCo Boys

I've been working with you kids for almost four years now. Before this, I worked for San Mateo and Contra Costa counties. Alameda County boys are by far the most wild. You guys are really something else. At first I was stressed out and couldn't believe how impossible you were.

Over the years we have learned to get along and laugh and talk a lot. I have hope for you guys, but deep inside it gets dark. I see you on the outs, and its like a meeting of old friends. We catch up on what's been going on: your girlfriend is pregnant, you're trying to work, and you just got out of prison. It's fun to see you guys, but we can never be friends. I wish we could, but we can't.

You need to be smart, self-controlled (Black, White, Asian and Mexican) young men. You need to stop hanging around your loser friends and/or others close to you drag you down with them. Be your own man and follow no one else. Get advice from older people. Ask them about their biggest mistakes as well as their biggest accomplishments. You need to learn to control your anger, and you need to learn to talk about your hurt and anger.

I am leaving to be with my dad before he dies. I will make a lot less money but, so what! A man takes care of the weak and sick. A man cares for his family and will give it all up for them. Give it all up for the ones you love, too. Give up the hanging out, robbing, and acting wild. If you love your parents, your family, then you will sacrifice your career and your lifestyle for their sakes. And if you can't do it, then you don't have love! To be happy, try giving unselfish love and don't expect payment back. Then you will be happy, I promise.

-Mr. Booth, 150 Crew Counselor



literacy for youth

From The Beat: It such an honor to have back in our pages the Lyberical Miracle, 150th Crew Librarian, Amy! This week she delivers the following from one of America's greatest cities, New Orleans, Louisiana. Seems like our Lyberical Miracle, 150th Librarian, Amy is definitely handling business, representing her great work at this librarians conference, with librarians from all over the country. We feel privileged that she is thinking of us and offers us her latest thoughts, and the magnificent writing that came out of a special session with the 150-girls unit recently. Read on!

A Letter To The Beat

Dear Beat

I am in New Orleans right now, at a conference for librarians. I feel proud that the librarians came to have their conference here, the first conference after the hurricane. The place where I am was not hit too bad by the hurricane, but there is still much devastation. On Monday, a whole bunch of librarians are going to go out and help rebuild. Down the hall from my hotel room is a youth church group from Tennessee is helping to tear down houses to rebuild. It seems like all of America should be here helping. The people of New Orleans are definitely glad we are here.

Ok, so here are my current favorite books by and about girls (and boys, check it out, you'll gain much knowledge).

"Upstate," by Kalisha Buckhanon. Natasha and Antonio are lovers and write each other passionate letters. Antonio is doing time for killing his father - did he really do that? and Natasha is going to wait for him. Or is she?

"Born Blue," by Han Nolan: Janie/Leshaya, raised by drug addicts and dealers trusts no one and loves nothing except for singing --- and she's really good. Will she make it in her life and as a singer cutting a single?

"A Piece of Cake" by Cupcake Brown: true story of a girl who truly went through it all... prostitution, gangs, addiction, death of her mom.... And came out... a lawyer!!! I sent a few paperback copies into SF YGC and 150th street, so see if you can find them (and treat them well as there are only a few copies)... the book is only published in hardback.

"Jesus Land: a Memoir," (or, in SF YGC look for the title, "Another Hour on a Sunday Morning...") it's the SAME book with a different title) by Julia Scheeres. This is a trip. A white, rich fundamentalist family adopts two African American boys, one of which is almost the same age as the author, Julia. Julia and David become best friends and survive the the racist town they live in, the brutality of their family and the reform school they get sent to in the Dominican Republic!!

And check out these great female authors/poets:

Sonia Sanchez
Devorah Major
Ruth Foreman
Janice Mirikitani
Sharon Flake
Sharon Draper
Danyelle Smith
Nichelle Tramble....

We had a writing workshop with author Devorah Major.... she's the SF Poet Laureate and awesome goddess of the streets. The girls at 150 wrote letters.... letters to someone or something unattainable, someone or something that they couldn't, for whatever reason, talk to... because they hadn't met them, they were gone from this world... or... Here is some of the awesome writing that came out of that workshop...

- Your Lyberical Miracle, 150th Librarian, Amy

Dear Father

Where are you? We've never met and I've always wondered what you look (like) and if you sobered up. I know you and Mamma were both crack heads but she's been clean sixteen and a half years. Hell, I'm seventeen and a half. Are (you) clean? Do (you) even remember I exist? Do you know you have a little girl, no I mean a young woman, carrying your last name? Why have you never tried to find me? Do I even look like you? I'll never know because you're not looking for me, and I'm not really looking for you. Are you dead? Are you sober and clean? Or are you still on crack? I want to know if you cleaned up why didn't you find me and cash me out. You owe me almost 18 years of love and money. But it's too late or love, but never too late for money. I just want to know if I look like you and get a little money that is, that's all.

Lastly, Where is my child support? And do I have brothers or sisters from you?

Love your almost 18-year-old daughter,

-RR

This Room Making Me Sick!!!

This room I'm in make me sick.
I wake up in this room every mornin
to see the white walls
this blurry window I try to look through
to see the birds flyin by
how I wish I was one
to be free
with no pain or haters around.
These walls have soo much pain
that I see the chipped paint
the words printed in the forever and ever
I wish I was free and no one is around me
I wish my pain was gone
so I wouldn't be thinking of the same song

This room making me sick
How this room is making me sick

- Anonymous

Dear Life Taker

Why did you take my best friend away from this earth, his family and friends? He wasn't perfect but he didn't deserve you! He wasn't all that bad! You have broken the hearts of many. Do you care? You hurt me in the worst way possible. I almost went insane! You took my nephew's life, my Grandmother's life. And attempted to take my other nephew's life too! Why do you take innocent babies life? They don't know nothing. I hate you life taker. I hate you with a passion! RIP...

Grandma
O.G.
Jimbo
Lil Arturo
Gimp

-unsigned

This Room

The whiteness of you the solid platform of the circular rhythm your square shape gives me nothing but anger! It reminds of my illegal mistakes. It's punishing not only me but my self-pride. When I cry the roof leaks, my tears support nothing not even me! It drips to the floor and vanishes from the cool air that dries it I sit on your slab and think to what to do next! Maybe try to find the writings on the wall that another lost soul wrote for the faith that whoever next will see and feel the same quiet feeling I felt! The books no longer interest me my pressure and determination no longer mean nothing my faith is that my door will open n I will be somewhat free Ha Ha! Funny how pathetic. But right now in my life it's a big issue in my life.

-Anonymous

Dear Sun, Moon,

This room getting me going
Crazy every time I look at these white walls
Not being able to see the sun the moon every hour after
hour being locked behind these doors looking at girls that
are here and not seeing no one new. Having to eat the same
thing day after day. Bananas, apple, chickens.
Telling people what to do every day
Those people not being your mother or father.

-D. Daddy

Dear Headache

Please go away why are you screwin' with me today? I can't stand the pain. It's starting to make me shake. I feel so sick inside. Hot flashes are coming this ain't a good sign I think I might end up at the hospital tonight. I can't think, I can feel my body getting weak. This headache is getting worse. I can feel these cold chills go through my body. Please headache just go away, I can't stand this pain. I feel like someone's stabbing me over and over again in my head. I can barely open my eyes I can't believe I'm able to write this.

-Anonymous

Dear Home

I remember all the good times we had together, the friends and family you brought together. I remember the hard times that went on but most of all I can't wait to see you again and feel the warmth and comfort that you provide me with. I remember your beautiful green carpet that you have that I sometimes lay on with all my large pillows from my room. I love walking in your doors and feeling safe and at home. I can't wait to see you again.

-Lil' Mikey

Dear Grandmother Miami

I never met you physically, but you knew me when I was one month old in my mother's womb. My mom told me you were (the) sweetest most kind woman on earth. I always thought of you as the kind of person, that when you enter a room the stress and anger leaves. The room eases up and everything seems lighter and easier to deal with. I really wish I could have met you, maybe you could have stopped me from getting into all the trouble I have been in these past few years. I probably would have never ended up in this place. I wish I could have seen you at least once so I can have my own memories of you. Not what my mother remembers and what I've seen in pictures of you looking very happy.

-Portia

Dear Master Plan

I can't wait until I start you. Tomorrow I leave to go to a placement and once I've figured you out, I just wanted to know if you were really going to help me in the long run. So I see that you combined your street smarts and your education to come up with a solution to a problem that was kind of difficult for you. I hope that the choice that you made will keep you away from the Hall. You are such a great plan and I guarantee you will work. Run plan run, Mickey told you to.

-Miss Miami

Dear Self

You are what you are.
Don't hide your true self
Because (of) what others think of you
I am beautiful I don't need no men
to tell me that
So I tell him
I am beautiful because my self (says) so

-Anonymous

Dear Starbucks Frappacino

I miss you dearly; your taste, your smell, your effect. I miss you going down my throat with the cold tingle I love so much. I miss your awakening, bold smell, and your creamy, frothy tan color. Ooh, I miss you so.

In this Hall I feel withdrawals from caffeine. I'm used to having you at least four times a week. When I don't have you, I have my trusty Folgers singles to fall back on. I'm a fool for coffee as you can see. All I need is caffeine and me.

-Coffee Achiever

Dear Josh

You were the best cousin.
I remember I used to call you pepperoni-face and you would call me ears.
I remember you like it was just yesterday. Like you were still here.
I remember when you would do your little dances like you were a break dance.
Or the way you would cup up your hand over your mouth and laugh.
Or the way your clothes were three times your size.
Why did that guy take you away from me?
Why did he shoot you in your head and splatter your brain on the cement?
Why did he take you away from me?
Why cousin? Why did he do it?
Why? Why. Why.

Grandma And Grandpa

Grandma I can't reach you right now but without you it's like my life gets hard every day. The family doesn't seem the same cause you are gone. You are in a place that I will probably never go to. Because I know you are in the right place I'm happy and glad for you. You belong there.

Our family is like a dead land all the dead people just don't care, they give up on you when we still have the chance. The love I had for you I still do and (I'm) going to continue on with it. Right now I'm still trying to settle down from all the nonsense.

I'm going to pray every day and ask God what do the dreams mean, and why did I hear my grandpa's voice when I was at church like it was a sign or something. When I heard his voice I felt down and confused. Talk to me God I would love to know what it all means.

Look down.

-Shatell

Damn

murders of loved ones
 so young, dying by the guns
 family, friends, and even strangers
 drug addicts, thugs, a lot of gang bangers
 big cities and small towns
 the similarity, is a crying sound
 kids of all ages, six feet in the ground
 souls are lost, never to be found
 you can search hard like a blood hound
 now you're at the plate, death at the mound
 the question is, can you escape
 or will you add on to the murder rate
 two lost lives, one in a casket, one in a crate [jail cell]
 is there a chance, or is it too late
 life gives you problems, do you have the answers
 or does it just overwhelm you, kinda like cancer

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So many people have gotten cancer and survived, it can't really be harder to quit the game and come out alive — and yet so many continue to die, saying, "I'm in too deep to quit" or, more simply, "Ef it!" It's hard to get young people to see the future before it hits, like a fastball to the dome with no helmet.

Game Over

what is the reason why we joined gangs
 was it for the money, fame, and so we could bang
 most of us don't even know what we getting into
 we just wanna be "bad" and look "cool"
 getting in trouble, fighting, making money
 — that's what it's all about
 but when you're locked up or hurt
 that's when you're going to start having doubts
 some feel we can't help it and that it's too late
 but ask yourself this —
 who's really in control of your life
 is it your boss, your friends, God, who
 let me tell you this 'cause it's true
 no one have control of your life besides you
 now why do you continue to do what's wrong
 poppin' those "e" pills and smoking weed outta that
 bong
 i know you just living the street life
 hoping one day you'll be rich
 if you choose to do that
 you're just gonna end up six feet in the ditch
 now is the time to quit
 so stop acting like a baby and throwing your fits
 i know it's hard leaving your past behind
 here's a tip — just start asking
 what's important in this life of mine
 all it takes is to look in a loved one's teary eyes
 and just sit down, think, and then realize
 staying in the game will only make you a fool
 so quit the game now, before it's "game over" for you.

-David, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You rhymes aim straight at the truth, and you hit the target, too. And for all those who will refuse to listen to you, we guarantee there are readers who will feel you and start to think about what they need to do to get out of a life that has them here doing time while Mom's at home crying. As bad as this is, it still beats dying, 'cause you can still choose to change your life. Thanks for the verse aimed at freeing our reader's from a curse.

The Real Story

Just to let you know, my case is closed, and the judge already gave me my one-year sentence. This is to all the people who have heard rumors and shhh going around in the hall. I was convicted of rape on July 8, 2005. I pleaded guilty because I knew what I did was horrendously wrong. I asked my PO if I could go to sex therapy (sharper future) and he told me that my parents refused to pay for it. I have heard so many stories and variations that it's not even close to the truth any more.

Let's clarify without details. I did not hide behind anything and "pounce." I didn't hit her; I did not threaten her family. It was rape because it was against her will--that's it—no handcuffs, drugs, knives, guns or anything. As a matter of fact, after it happened, I set up a date with her the day after it happened. The plan was, we were going to meet at the police station at 10:00 and I was going to confess. She just got paranoid that I wouldn't show, so she called them. I said in my statement, "Anything she said I did, I did." She didn't lie. So if you've heard anything other than what you've just read, it's not true! Stop with the rumors, please. Also, if you've been a long-time reader, you'll have read my poems and seen how sorry I really am.

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: Just like anyone, you seem to have had every response to this tragedy possible, almost as if you go from mood to mood about it. You've suffered terribly, regardless of what phase of response you're going through, and you have our hearts. We just hope that your life will go on beyond this, and it will meld into your life as something crucial but livable, and that you don't define your sense of self or your character by what you did. Time can heal a lot of things, and/or give you a sense of proportion to everything. We hope you have the patience to absorb all the lessons what has happened can teach you, and that you can forgive yourself and live the rest of your beautiful, creative life.

Moving On

(dedicated to my first love)

i think about all those times we had
 we had our good times, and we had our bad
 you always say that no matter what, you'll always care
 but when i really needed you, you weren't even there
 you remember all the things you told me, which were all
 lies
 i couldn't believe it myself, i was just asking myself "why"
 "i care for you" and "i like you a lot" — you did all that talk
 but you never shown me 'cause you couldn't walk the walk
 i have really done all that i can
 despite my efforts, i still lost you to the other man
 now i'm left alone with a broken heart
 i feel so damn stupid 'cause i should've known right from
 the very start
 no words can describe this pain
 time may heal the wounds, but the scars will remain
 you know, you really get me stuck in between the two
 i really didn't know what to do
 all i know is that i'm addicted to you and me
 but for now, i think i just need to let it be
 even though you may be gone
 i just gotta remember, life always goes on
 i know how much i love you
 and all i ever wanted was to hear "i love you, too"

-David, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A sad poem to write and a hard truth to bear, when you feel let down by the one for whom you care. When you give all that love and don't feel loved in return, the love that once healed all your wounds, becomes a deep pain that won't go away soon. But you're right to call it an addiction, 'cause "bad love" is just like loving an addictive drug — every time you go back to it, things only get worse, until you finally get through it and escape its curse.

I asked my PO if I could go to sex therapy (sharper future) and he told me that my parents refused to pay for it.

Absolutely Free

I remember the first time I awoke
Homeless on the street—cold, hungry and broke
I was in a dumpster with a liter of coffee
Curled up in a box, sneezing and coughing
I had no friends in town and no place to go
I left my girlfriend and ran from home
I was lonely and I had sprained my wrist
Seven o'clock in the morning, and I had to piss
I had no toilet, so I used the floor
And watched in fear as it flowed under the door
That was the first time I ever felt dirty
I was seventeen, but I felt like an old thirty
I had stubble on my chin; I hadn't eaten in days
I kind of miss those days, 'cause at least I was free
And free absolute to be I, myself, and me

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: So you've felt what it's like to be in the depths of cold, alone and lonely, and the heights of being existentially free at the same time. You've already learned a lot in your young age. Why did you abandon everyone in your life at one time? Have you regained any of those friendships? Have you had any luck in establishing a home for yourself, when you get out again? You'll need the stability of a home, even if it's just a room somewhere, so you can get yourself on your own two feet and gain some financial aid and go to college and/or get a job. With the talent, imagination and a mind like yours, we hope you'll pack all the wisdom and experience into your head and heart you can!

thinkin' you earnin' respect by acting like a beast
ignorantly bringing genocide to these oakland streets
sometimes i stop and think is this life for me
different turfs filled wit' envy and hate

Surviving The Street

i had to shoot and fight just to survive on the street
because haters tried to make it impossible for me to eat
police catch you late night and you get your ass beat
didn't feel safe if i wasn't carrying heat
always looking over my shoulders for enemies that creep
this isn't a movie ninjas playin' for keeps
got to stay on point keep one eye open while you sleep
takin' advantage of people that's weak
got to watch your friends because some of them want to
see you leak
people dying left and right murder rate at it's peak
dirty cops see you earnin' so they want a piece
i'm speaking of the west similar to the east
thinkin' you earnin' respect by acting like a beast
ignorantly bringing genocide to these oakland streets
sometimes i stop and think is this life for me
different turfs filled wit' envy and hate
brothers wanna take your life 'cause of the money you
make
will i make it to twenty-five will i live to that date
or will i get life and forever be a ward of the state
ignorance all around me bragging about the murder rate
pray to god every night i hope he isn't late
spending the rest of my life in jail will that be my fate
how much crazy shit to change my life does it take
i'll change my life if i get this break

-Wayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You can't wait on getting that break to make the decision to change. We've seen too many play that bargaining with God game, and it doesn't end with change — it ends with a thug returning to the same old same. When it comes to praying for God's help, it's not about bargaining to help yourself — it's about confessing your sins and admitting to God you're ready to begin to follow a higher path, to start pleasing God in thought and act, no matter what! The surrender to God and the decision to change, must be unconditional; and then you can pray for God's mercy not only for you but for your enemy, too. Pray for the strength to do whatever it takes, to make that change, with or without a break in your case. Trust us, your blessings will be myriad — but no bargaining, decide to change, period!

Expressions

If I could turn back time
I would make my girlfriend happy
When issues arose from within me
I dealt with them like a child
Downing shot after shot
My reflection in the bottom of a glass
Disheveled face and broken soul
I can see the tear run down my cheeks
After being held close for so long
Finally breaking down and crying
My front failed and shattered on the floor
Me, the real me, is lonely
In a crowd of one hundred, I am still one
When time changes, I do not
"Be still," my mind says, but I will not
I will not

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: Beautiful, tragic poem that breaks your heart to read. There's nothing wrong with dealing with some problems like a child, because you're still partly a child, partly a man. You have an enormously tender, gentle heart, and a wild imagination that can include the grotesque and cruel, and everything you feel is revealed right there on your face. One thing we all, especially adolescents, do, is tend to test the limits of what we've been taught is possible and/or desirable, and one way to do that is to go way beyond the "known" boundaries, at least known to oneself. But, unfortunately, once you venture beyond what most of the rest of the world considers okay to do, they send the imaginary "devils" onto you, in the form of guilt, incarceration, ostracism. And sometimes, as, unfortunately, you already know, after you've committed some things, you may try to make it better, but there's no going back.

My Thanks To The Beat

What it be Beat. First off RIP Cell like always. Now back to my topic, I just wanted to thank ya'll for publishing all of our writings and art because you really help a lot of youngsters express themselves and me personally I love seeing my pieces in a book and not only that, The Beat readers respond to every piece and it's good to let everybody know how we really feel in these walls.

If there wasn't no Beat Within a lot of people really wouldn't know how we feel and what we go through and this is also another way for people to express their feelings, let people really know what we are going through behind these locked doors. And it helps us cool down and I just wanted to thank The Beat for everything they done for us, please stick around for a minute. Night night time for this youngsta.

-Lil' Naudie Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for the encouragement! We are honored to play such an important role in your life inside the hall, and we welcome you to come to our office when you get out and see the whole operation!

I just wanted to thank The Beat for
everything they done for us

Life Can't Always Be Exciting

I think of all the times I been here,
And all the time I wasted
Because not once did I succeed in not coming back
From the time I was a young teen, one-hundred-
pound, crystal, meth addict
To a fifteen-and-half-year-old, lost, pregnant girl, and
then there
Was the sixteen-year-old drunk homegirl
But now I sit here the much more matured seventeen-
year-old
Fearing my eighteenth birthday, five months away.
I look back, and see that most of my teenage years
were spent on the run
in Hayward, in the mental hospital, in a group home or
rehab, or locked up.
I've been let to go home twice, both times I screwed
up.
Now I'm all alone scared of the adulthood that is
months away.
With enough credits as a sophomore and I was
supposed to graduate
in about three weeks.
I'm lost and have nowhere to go.
I'm suppose to go to a group home pretty soon
and intend on getting my GED.
Also I need to get a job and find somewhere to live,
because I've burnt all my bridges with my family.
If only I had done what I had to do in the first place,
I wouldn't be in the position I am in today.
I'm scared of being the woman I have to become,
because under all this, I'm still that young party girl
looking for fun.
I wish I listened to my dad when he told me to stay in,
"life can't always be exciting."
Because in five -months, it won't be too exciting going
to Santa Rita.
(Formerly Lil' Mamiz)

-Lady T, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've been through a lot, and being so young, will probably go through a lot more. Eighteen is an adult in the eyes of the court, but most of us still feel that kid inside way beyond our eighteenth birthday. Still, we have to take responsibilities for our own lives, and that's hard. Just take one thing at a time and remember where you want to end up.



Don't Come Back

Hey, what's crackin' Beat? This is your homegirl, Lady T coming to you from this decent East Bay Facility. Just saying what's up to all loved ones in facilities in the Bay Area.

I just want to say to all locked up, who this is their first time ever. "Don't come back" because the more you come back, the more you get lost in this jacked up system. For real, hear me out! First it will be the Hall then a group home/rehab, then Camp or ROP (for boys) then CYA, then Rita or the Pen. But I'll tell you this, it all starts with the hall. So if it's your first time make it your last! Don't get institutionalized and let the system play you.

-Lady T, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, that's a powerful message. You just laid out the pattern for most incarcerated youth. Recidivism: the tendency to relapse into a previous undesirable type of behavior, especially crime.

It's Way Too Real: One Funeral, One Vigil, One Wake

Salutations Beat. This is that Shorty droppin' these linas in Max. Just wanted to touch on this topic of funerals.

I can name a handful of homies that's gone. Restin' in eternal peace, watching over us. But I've only been to one funeral, one vigil, and one wake, The whole existence of funerals is too depressing.

The first and only funeral I went to was my pop's homeboy from the hood. This was way back, I was about nine or ten at the time, and staying with my moms. My pops was recovering, still doin' his thang. One foot in the barrio and one foot in fatherhood. All he would do is stop by and bring me some model cars and bounce.

Every once in a while he would take me to look at old school candied-out bombs. So he just stopped by and asked if I wanted to see some clean ass cars. He looked kinda depressed, but I was just interested in them cars.

Everybody was dressed in black, my pops in some sticky Stacy Adams, creased down slacks, a white dress up long sleeved t with a black vest, and a matching black brim with a red feather. 64's, 51's 48 Fleet Lines, cherried out 52 deluxes. Bad ass cars.

But what stained this picture was all the hard and grim faces inside those cars and surrounding the gravesite. Old school homeboys and weeping homegirls. Old, hard, grim, black and brown.

The only wake I've been to is my homeboy. RIP Speedy from the hood. It was at the hood church -- teary eyed homeboys and homegirls huggin' the walls and the ones who were too depressed posted at the back entrance, eyes covered wit' the darkest shades hiding tears. It was crazy. It was way too real.

The only vigil I went to was for the homie RIP Smokey, from a connected and respected neighborhood. It was hella homeboys and homegirls surrounding the spot where the homeboy took his last breath.

We were all drowning our pain and sorrows in 40s. Tryin' to ease the pain.

Rest in peace: Smokey, Speedy, Bandit

-Young Shorty, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Another vivid snapshot of your life, and some of its hardest moments. We felt sorry for your dad too - sounds like he was a good but troubled man who loved you to death and still didn't know how to give you what you needed. One more thought: It's a trip how they always say Rest in peace, like we leave peace in the afterlife, instead of trying to make it happen in this life we live today. What we wish for you - and for your homeboys and homegirls, and of course for your so-called enemies and ever other person on lockdown, is peace in life - because as you already know from the story you just wrote, the price is too damned high. LIP, Shorty. Live In Peace.

Diego's Story: Part One

This is Lil' Diego comin' at ya from max today, it is a beautiful sunny day, perfect to start my story about part of my life. Well this is how it starts.

It was a hot summer. I don't remember what year, but I was about seven years old when me my mom and my little brother immigrated to the United States. That was when my life really started. The first place I came to was in Oakland but I didn't stay there for a long time.

A couple of weeks after I was in Oakland, I moved with my uncle in Richmond, CA. Well, life went on for a couple of months, and finally my 8th birthday came in July 31st. Well I had a birthday party, like any other kid around the block where I stayed at. Me and my family had a lot of fun. I was so happy because I seen part of my family on my momma's side that I never seen before.

After the summer was over I started school in some public elementary school in Richmond. At first it was hard for me to go to school because I couldn't speak any English. I didn't have any friends. It was really hard for me to succeed in life at that point, but after six or seven months, I was already reading and writing English like any other kid in my classroom. I was so happy I learned to do all this stuff because now I could understand the meaning of life, and I was happy for myself and my family was too.

Well life went on and I was about 10 years old, I didn't want to stay in Richmond no more, so I moved back to East Oakland with my mom and my little brother and my oldest brother who had already been here for a few years. Well now I'm looking at myself in another public elementary school but this time it was in Oakland. To me it was like starting all over but this time I had something that meant a lot on this place: I knew how to read and write English.

At first it was hard because I didn't know nobody, but after a while I got to know almost the whole schoolhouse. I even had a girlfriend, my first real girlfriend I ever had. She was like something that motivated me to get up every morning and made it to school on time. I also had a friend. (I'm not going to tell you his name, but he was cool at that point of time. But listen to what happened to our friendship, later on in my life story.)

Well like I was saying, now I'm in the fifth grade and I think that's when some trouble started looking for me. I started getting into a lot of physical fights, and I start getting suspended from school a lot I miss out on a lot of my work. My grades started going down and I was afraid to flunk fifth grade but thanks to my teacher, I made up on some school work, and I made it through the fifth grade.

I graduated and moved on to Junior High. Before I went to Junior High I started playing baseball in the summer but after that summer, I just stop playing sports. Now that the summer was over and now I was in Junior High, and I was happy that I was in that position.

At the same time I wasn't, because I got separated from a lot of my potnas. But they didn't separate me from my girlfriend. Well through the whole sixth grade I only got in trouble a couple of times nothing big -- just fights like always. But other than that I was a straight A student.

That school year past, and I moved onto the seventh grade.

I guess I could say that that's when I really started

messing up. I started smoking weed and messing with a lot of females around my age and also started getting bad grades. I got to the point that I flunked seventh grade, and the next year after I flunked it just got worse.

I was getting into more fights than usual, and I also started skipping classes. Everything just went bad until I got expelled from that school and I got my ass whooped so bad by my dad that I didn't want to do nothing else that got me in trouble. I got sent to another Junior High School. At first I thought it was going to be harder for me to make it through that school but that's when all the help came to me. I started getting help from a lot of people, teachers, counselors, even the principal. It was hard at first but after a couple of months later I was already on track with good grades and all that good stuff.

At the end of that school year I made it to the eighth grade. The first couple of months of my eighth grade I started falling off again. Now I was smoking weed on a daily basis. I also started selling drugs, because everybody in that school was consuming marijuana. Since our school was located in an area where weed was nowhere to be found, it seemed easy for me to purchase a large amount of it and bring enough to school for everybody and get my money at the same time. At that time the money was looking so good that I even started skipping a lot of my classes just for that money... but one day I had run out of the merchandise I was selling and I decided to go to my fifth period class.

When I was sitting at my desk the teacher come up to me and said that the principal had called me to the main office. At first I thought for what? I didn't do nothing wrong but skip classes! TO BE CONTINUED!

-Diego, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Diego you've lived ten lifetimes in your first few years, this is amazing to read... we have all sorts of questions now - why did you get into fights? Was it other people starting up with you because you were new in town? Or were you starting the fights? Or was something going on at home that was stressing you out? What was it that made you decide you wanted to move from Richmond to Oakland? What happened to that first girlfriend, the one you really liked? Were you the only person in your family getting into trouble? Or was it other people too? And mostly - don't you think it's interesting that so many people tried to help you along the way? It just shows how people can see someone in you - a good successful person, trying to break through. We think he will.

Funerals And Close Friends

Well, I feel really bad when my close friends around me die. It's like a part of our neighborhood disappears every time one our loved ones are gone.

I've only had two situations were people in my family have died. It's like, man, a part of your life died with them.

The only thing I hate about it (funerals) is that, after a couple of weeks, everyone forgets about you except your family. It seems like everybody has a reason to get high for a couple of days. Man, that's probably what makes people cry: All drunk.

I really like it when people around the neighborhood that take time to light up a candle for you and bring balloons and teddy bears. That is the only thing I really like about mourning for somebody.

I just hope that young people stop killing each other and hope that people just die from natural causes and stop black on black crime.

I love my life. I don't want friends to be looking over my casket because a hater killed me for something I got. I just love my life and hate to see so many of my young people die.

-Alicia, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Excellent on-topic writing! We agree with many things you mention in your piece. What do you think can be done to reduce crime in communities? What can you do to ensure that the lives of the people you care about are not forgotten? When mourning, do you believe it's O.K. to cry, laugh, or can mourning be a mixture of both? Thank you for putting these thoughts on paper. You are truly a bright person. Have you learned from the mistakes that brought you in here?

It's like a part of our neighborhood disappears
every time one our loved ones are gone.

This Life

The bad shhh happened when I was ten years old. I got hit by a car in West Oakland, and I was in the hospital for a long time. I was in real pain, and all I could do was eat, sleep and shhhh all damn day.

So when I got out, I went bad on a lot of people. I did not have to do that. They did not do nothing to me, but I said "ef" them..

Now I think about what I did on the streets of Oakland, and I could have died a lot of times, but I like to think I have nine lives, like a cat.

When I hit the streets I started off sellin' dope with my ninjas, not listening to my mother. I been out at all times of the night, like I was a grown man, or some shhhh, smoking weed and sippin' on bo' so I can lean, but I was only a young teen at the time, doin' man shhhh. My mom told me don't do that but I said "ef" it, I'm gonna do what I want to do.

I had my next birthday on June 4, 2004. That was one of my best birthdays but my ninja Tay went to the Hall. But not for long.

Then me and my big brother went down for some real shhhh that could have put me away for a long time. I have nightmares about that stuff. It was messed up, I was scared for real, my heart dropped to the floor when my mom ran down to where he was in the five o car. My brother was in the Tazzy car and we went down to the police station and got fingerprinted. I did not like what was happening to us. We went down with a ninja that was there when it happened.

So we got to the Hall, and that was the first time I went to B unit. I was mad as hell, like my life had ended, so I said the word F the world, and every one was against me, that's was how I felt. And when I got out, not too long, I was back on the street, like it was not shhhh. I'd fight and stuff and I started to sell dope again.

I got sent to B unit, and I was mad as hell but they sent me to camp, where I did seven months and pimped it like a boss. I did the program, it was not so bad. They put me and my brother away from each other for a long time. It seems like most of the time I wanted to cry but I can't cry. Even if I get shot I probably won't cry.

My heart is already broken and I don't feel pain no more. I don't go to school no more, so I say "ef" school. But dummies say "ef" school. I need school to get to where I want to go. One day it will pay off. I will leave the streets for good and go places like Paris. I will take my family with me, I love them.

Back to my life. I got out of camp and I was out for two months and did some stupid stuff. Now I'm sitting in max and my lil' brother is in another unit I miss him. We did a lot together. I haven't seen him in along time, I was at camp when he came in here, I was hella mad at him for coming in, because all my moms boys was locked up. I came home on weekends but that's not shhhh. We need to be home with the family, my big brother is out but we is not, that hurt my feelings. That is the only feelings I got is my mother you don't see it until you cannot talk to her when you want to. I miss coming home and she is in her bed sleeping. I just look at her for a minute and then I watch TV and go to sleep, and that is my life.

-Lil' Man Man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's funny. On first read, this gripping story sounds like it's from someone who's angry and giving up hope, but then when you read it again, you see there's so much more going on. You're trying to hold your family together, you have dreams of a much brighter future, and you know in your heart of hearts that you need to go to school to get out and rise up. Hold on to this piece, and read it when you feel discouraged, both to remind yourself of what you can accomplish (writing one's own life story takes a lot of strength and skill and courage, and look you did it!), and also what you want to achieve.

Will Not Return

In one of your responses you asked me to write a piece on how I will not return back to being a captive.

Me going back to jail is negative. I will not fall back and be a recidivist. My experience in here will be perpetuating in my mind. I've never had so much time to just think about my future and what I want to make a career out of. I also have assorted people who care for me and people who don't.

I refuse to be oppressed. I have too much of being capable of. A mind is a beautiful thing to waste. And life is too precious to throw away.

I've been here for three months, so far, and it has taught me a valuable and perpetual lesson. I've learned how to be autonomous. Which is what a man needs to know.

I don't know about anyone else but Mr. Morris, Roscoe, Mcgee, and Mr. Owens lectures have persuaded me. Even though it may be the same lecture everyday, it sinks deeper into my mind. If a person leaves here without a positive goal or plan it's inevitable that they will be back.

I've been around friends of deception that's why my attitude became haughty. I've seen many people return after being released. I just can't fall into that return category. It's too many opportunities out there. And freedom is the best thing anyone can have.

Now I see what the other side can be like. My mother always told me that I would learn the hard way and I have.

It's a beautiful world out there and I don't want to let time go by me. I want to be happy. Live a full life and be there for my future wife and kids. Turfin' it ain't for me no more, it's so indecisive unless you want to be locked away or six feet under and only be remembered by a t-shirt.

Also, I ain't no starving individual. I got family that ain't doped out and will always be there to give me a hand. Plus it's too much out there--I have to live my life to the fullest.

I haven't left the Bay Area since fifth-grade and that was because of my school. I want to be able to take my mother on a cruise or my girl on vacation somewhere outside of America, you feel me, and just do it real big like J-Pig with a wig.

It's over for these streets ninjas is really dying like it's Vietnam in the Bay. And the sad part about it is ninjas be bragging about the murder rate inclining like it's a positive situation happening!

Well anyway I'm just gone do me and not be worried about the next ninja. I'm going to continue to be optimistic and anticipate my release date. That's all I got to say for now. So all the authentic ninjas stay up and keep a notion of who you are and what you stand on this earth for. And keep away from the suckas because it's one born every minute. I'm out.

-Lil' Toot, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, thank you for sharing. It's really nice to hear such positive words and plans and we can't tell you enough how glad we are that you've had the chance to illuminate your mind. We can't wait to hear your success story, so keep us posted. Great piece of honest work! Yet, the hard work still lies ahead, but we have faith that you will handle your life with a new positive perspective. Remember, if you need help, ask. Remember there will be some hard days, but in the end you can and you will prosper with happiness.

If a person leaves here without a positive goal or plan it's inevitable that they will be back.

Does every ninja
have to pick up
their guns every
time they got
a problem to
solve?

Violence

I'm really getting tired of all these ninjas getting shot at. I was watching the news and a ninja got shot down. They just getting shot left and right. This crazy. Does every ninja have to pick up their guns every time they got a problem to solve?

If you ask me, they're just cowards. What happened to a one-on-one fistfight or just talking it out? I mostly those gangs out there. I can't stop 'em, and I'm not going to try, but somebody needs to realize that if you got a problem don't pick up yo' duce-duce or yo' pistol. Pick up yo' fist and resolve it.

That's all I got late. I would go and talk to them one by one and ask them, "You want die for a color or good? You're dumb. Make a truce. No more killing. This has to stop right now." I would make a difference if I could

-Bj B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Thank you for this very direct piece about why we shouldn't rely on guns to settle our problems. We agree with you, and we hope your words can persuade someone that you are right. You can't always change the world, Billy, but you can change yourself, and by changing yourself, you are making a difference.

How It Feels

Don't act like my life was chosen
went bad 'cause my pops was smoking
now I'm left here in the open
to live or get killed in Oakland
ever since I was seven
my life has been chased by demons
now they sweating and question me
to explain all the reasons
why I act some certain ways
why hustle just to get paid
but they can't understand
I suffer pain everyday
so I got up off my feet
I walked right up into the streets
and what I came across was gangstas
who were there for me
but when we were bumpin' heads
yeah at that moment it's a problem
but then I start realizin it's 'cause we had stuff in common
so now I'm peeping game
but still my life needs to change
so I was smart
went to San Jose and started moving thangs
but then I met some people and my life just took a left
now I was lost
'cause I didn't know who was up in my chest
chillin' wit' different people and started getting caught up
but the stupid thing about it I really didn't give a ...
'cause that's when I was young-dumb-stupid
living the streets
my mind got off of papa
'cause I was smoking my trees
but you know what people say your gonna learn from mistakes
but I just felt disgusted to look myself in the face
I wouldn't be here today but I cheated death wit' a wish
that wish is that I'm never coming back to this shhh
picture the feeling that it feels to be drilled into fear
or being broken 'cause ya heart was being pierced wit' a spear
picture the feeling and tell me if you come back pleased
'cause I've been going through these thangs since I was crawling on knees

Verse 2

Do you know how it feels to be young and screaming for help
sooner or later you get to thinking depending on no one else but yo' self
I'm on my own but still I'm feeling alone
I'm a youngsta on the street but I walk around like I'm grown
trying to maintain my solja
I'm humble trying to stay calm
'cause everyday someone's stitching
I'm trippin
Cussin' out moms
but I got this pain inside about my past to release
so it's me I gotta speak now or for the moment keep peace
but I freeze
I gotta choose to forgive and forget
but I refuse to make a decision that soon I'll regret
so I step but later on I'm a come across it again
I could keep expressin' myself but the pain just won't end
I can't win but then again this youngsta could never lose
so put yo'self in my shoes and tell me what would you do
if you was trapped in a world that didn't tell you no news
would you act a fool
yes I got plenty questions to ask
but you would have questions too if you went through half of my past
no I'm not getting mad 'cause now I'm trying to get even
hope we got a understanding on why these losers be bleeding.

-Evans, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Whoa! This is an incredible piece! The getting even part is a little worrisome, we hope you're speaking metaphorically, but otherwise great poetic work. Keep it up Evans!

If You Want To Believe It

Well, this is S, and if you don't know me, don't say you do, 'cause you don't. Let me tell you about me. I was a good boy. I never disrespected anybody, if they did not mess with me. Well, forget about all that. Let me tell you what happened. One day I was rolling with my bro and it was a good day. We were having a blast with some girls. But the day went by and we got caught up, and now I am facing life without parole.

And that's not all. I am going to have a little girl in early October, and just thinking about that makes me want to cry. Well, that is the truth. You can believe it or not – I don't care. That is on you. Alrato. I will see you at the crossroads.

-S, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: To say that you 'got caught up' sounds like an understatement. We don't know what happened, but it sounds like a lot of pain for everyone involved. We hope that time will heal the wounds, everyone's.

Poem About A Book

I can't wait to get out, I'm a be completely free
No POs or concrete beds as far as the eye can see
The only thing is, my poems won't get written
Yep, you heard right, after my release, I'm quittin'
Maybe in a couple of years, I'll a start back up
But not before that, don't want to refill that cup
If I do write, it'll be a big fat book
With a mirror for a cover so at yourself you'll look
It'll be for young adults, 'cause I know how it is
I understand the confusion of adolescence
Just to get them into it, I'll have the first chapter
About just sex, something about "Go faster"
I know how I am and I know what I like
So that'll keep them reading and step to the mike
The plot'll be juicy, probably a murder or five
Extremely gory details, but fine as the whitest wine
Explicit details, not holding anything back
A full entourage of tendons and bone cracks
And then we'll introduce a girl—you know what's next
So all through the book they'll have sex
The only reason is to stir kids' imagination
That's how they would do it, if it was their creation
It'll be for girls and boys, but strictly young adults
So, all you young young'uns, go ahead and sulk
Easy to read, with not many big words
Plenty of heinous adjective and exciting verbs
That's about it for my poem about a book
Dominic, in about ten years, go look
I'll be an author and make some money
Maybe I'll dress up as the Easter Bunny

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: You should write a book, maybe an autobiography. Anyone, especially teenagers, might really learn from what you've already been through, as we've already seen by your amazing poems. If you write out of your heart and describe actual incidents, it should be insightful, if heartbreaking, to read.

We were having a blast with some girls.
But the day went by and we got caught
up, and now I am
facing life without parole

Precious

She's on the street again
Will she never see the end?
Another night lone with someone new
She can dress the part, to hide a broken heart
You hurry past so she won't call on you
But she's precious in the eyes of Jesus
Precious in the eyes of the King
When will you realize the ones you criticize are precious in
the eyes of Jesus?
Old beyond his years
He's learned to hide the tears
At twelve he's tough enough to fool his friends
They know him downtown well
And he's put his dad though hell
There's nothing good you can see in him trapped within a
shell
Someone you don't know well
Someone who always falls
And you have no love at all
So you just keep them locked behind the door.

-Kalisa, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We love this poem, though it is a sad one. It does seem strange to us too, that people who call themselves Christians, people who say they believe in the Word of Jesus, actually disrespect that Word every time they hate, every time they attack their enemies (Jesus said, "Love thy enemies as thyself..."), every time they hurt another person or themselves. We're not clear what you had in mind at the end, though. What is it that you keep locked behind the door?

Suspense

She comes home to silence. She is too tired to notice it, as she sheds her clothes and steps into the shower. Selecting her lavender body wash from above the sink, she lathers herself with scent and lets her muscles go. After about five minutes of letting the drops beat on her tight shoulders, she hears footsteps on the other side of the shower curtain. She suddenly remembers leaving the bathroom door open, as she turned on the water. The footsteps stopped and through the pink lace, she saw a figure huddled on the floor. She stood paralyzed with fear, expecting something. She pulled herself together and turned off the water, listening closely. "Oh God," she thought, as heavy breathing came from the crouched form. "What the hell is it?" She pulled back the shower curtain and laughed, the noise breaking through the silence. Her laugh was joined by a joyful bark from Otis, her dog, who was lying on the ground, seemingly smiling.

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: Great story! Reminds us of the classic Alfred Hitchcock movie, "Psycho," where there is a real suspenseful shower scene. As for your piece, especially when we're alone, we tend to forget to close and/or lock a door, and to be casual about roaming around the house, so when something threatens us, it's all the more sinister! You write beautifully from kids', women's, girls' points of view, which must mean that you can easily vicariously become other people and enjoy being them imaginatively. What a beautiful talent to have, essential for a writer!

The Passing Of A Man

The passing of a man, he fell too soon. He went down not from bullets, not from the streets, but from nature, from cancer, from something you can fight and win or give up and lose. He fought and he won — and it still got him. It got my father. It got him. It got him before his time.
In memory of a great man.

-Zolton B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Thank you for reminding us that death comes in many forms, certainly not all from the barrel of a gun. There is nothing nice about cancer — except the heart of a surviving son that can so beautifully convey the love he had for a great father.

Me, Myself And Me

Shaved head and deep green eyes
 Steady gaze out of your mind
 You are an artistic person
 Not afraid to show off your talent
 Low voice, scratchy, like old records
 While I am nice to people, caring
 You cop an attitude
 Through our minds are alike
 With the same DNA
 I am a Scorpio, stubborn
 And you are a teddy bear
 You are me
 And I is we
 Together we make us
 I stand by you in times of need
 You control my emotions when anger overwhelms
 Though you like your stubble—five o'clock shadow
 style
 And I like clean and fresh
 Different people inside the same head
 We kick and scream in this enclosed space
 We both smell through the same nose
 Left ear on both of us pierced on two occasions
 We think through the same motions
 But we are two sides
 While minds spew different everything
 Like sawdust from a broken beanbag
 Shriveled vocal cords like the top of a burnt match
 You are me
 And I is we
 Together we make us

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: What happens when your two sides collide in your mind, Dominic? Is there war up in there? Racket? Do you two argue? Do you two reason everything out? Is there mutual respect? Do you think everyone has two sides? More than two sides? Do you feel different emotionally when one or the other side prevails?

My Third Eye

Crying, whispering prayers to my pillow
 Essence of compassion emanating from its warmth
 I feel my energy ebb away
 As my body melts into my mattress
 Somewhere peaceful and quiet, alone with my thoughts
 A living force, an electrical pulse vibrates my bones
 The drone of dissociation brings forth peace
 In my thoughts, a rose sheds its thorns
 An intense glow emanates from the ground and I see
 My body throbs and pulses with excitement
 Concentrated sunlight takes hold of me
 A precise spot in the middle of my forehead opens
 A third eye, my third eye, is revealed
 With the freshly exposed item, my gut squeezes
 A selected tear drips between my eyebrows
 Trickles down the bridge of my nose and is gone
 My skin dry and barren, as though nothing happened
 And just as rapidly and suddenly as it arrived
 My eyesight was reduced to only two
 I didn't feel sad, though, I felt blessed
 I disposed of any negative notions and slept

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: Amazing poem, Dominic. It can happen, especially when you're alone and nothing can distract you, something like a third eye can and sometimes does open and a whole new world can be revealed to you, especially if you don't try to mess with it and just let it happen. You don't even know where in your psyche it comes from and it doesn't matter. Often a wholly new vision, something that you didn't forcibly create, and not necessarily coming from your point of view, rather something more "objective" comes pouring out of you, and widens your experience. What emerged when your "third eye" opened? Is your third eye where you've written from before, in your poems or stories? If so, why don't you write more for The Beat Within about what you've created out of the visions you've gained from your "third eye?"

A selected tear drips between my eyebrows
 Trickles down the bridge of my nose
 and is gone

Forgive Me

If I had anyone's phone number, I would call the Lord!
 I need to speak to the Lord above, so he can tell me
 that He accepts my sincere apology to everyone for
 this display of stupidity and forgives me. It would
 make me a whole lot stronger to hear that He forgives
 me.

I've realized the horrible mistake that I've made
 the moment I walked away from that man, and if I could
 rewind time to that night, I would've went home...
 I would've went home and turned off my phone! I
 would've never went to meet the guys downtown.
 I wouldn't have hung out all... but I can't, and no
 matter how bad I wish and hope, I cant. I can't take
 back what I did. I truthfully can't handle the burden
 of having harmed people, but I beg forgiveness

-Ds B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We don't know the details of your crime, but we can most definitely feel the sincerity of your remorse and regret. You're right, though, you cannot turn back the hands of time and replay a single moment of your life. But you can write whatever future you imagine for yourself. You say you can't handle the burden of having hurt people, but you are handling it. Yes, it's hard. Yes, it hurts. But you are growing from this unfortunate experience, and what you have learned can be passed down to the next youngster who thinks hurting people is cool. If you can't erase the past, you can at least balance it out by making positive contributions to the future.

Life Goes On

Have you ever had known someone who died? When most people hear this, they think who killed them. Most people forget that murder is not the only way people can die. But I realized this when I found out someone I knew died in a car accident. This made me realize that anyone can die for any reason.

That being said, a big part of death is grieving. Sometimes people grieve for weeks or even months. While I realize that grieving is important, you should consider this: would that person feel sad if he/she saw you crying all the time? Would that person try anything to make you feel better from the almighty Phoenix that is reborn from the ashes from which it died? Death sometimes kills a part of you, and often over grieving makes it so you might as well be dead.

When I die I would like everyone to instead of grieve me to instead celebrate my life. There a time for grieving but also a time to live on. I myself would not be able to pass on to my eternal resting place until I see all the people grieving me happy again. Live every, every drop of life to the fullest. Yours truly,

-Otis B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope no one is either grieving or celebrating your life for a very, very long time. But we like your idea that grief should be tempered with life. All premature death, whether by violence, accident or disease, is cause for grief — and all should remind us of just how valuable this one and only life we have is.

RIP Cell aka Marcellus

Beat what it be. This ya boy Lil' Naudie Bo still on that rest in peace Marcellus shhh. Bra still can't get over it. Is he really gone? No gettin' back so the only thing I wish and pray for is that my bra is in peace where ever you are.

I miss you bra, back in them days me and you used to go looney. Damn them grapes used to have us on some stupid shhh. Rmember you hiding me in your grandma and grandpa's basement lookin' at me through some peep hole talking about, "Can you see me?" Hell no, I couldn't see you, but you ran down there fast when I started to eff with your grandpa's tools.

Me and you loved us some dogs. Remember when the people in the back of yo house had puppies so me and you came up with a master plan, to go take us some puppies. You came with me the first time but the second it was all bad, and you said you was gonna watch from the fence but when I got caught where were you at? Bra, damn I wish we could go back to them days.

I still don't know why ain't shhh been done since you died. One of the bra's said he think he knows why you died.

Last time I seen you, you dropped me off in the hood and pushed me off in the white Lumina.

I remember the time before that I was walking my dog down your street and you popped your head out the door and called my name. I seen you and was like I be God damn my ninja Cell. Your dreads was about hella long too. We went back to my house and boxed in my grandma's car. That's when you told me bout what them fake ass ninjas was doing behind your back but I ain't even gonna speak on it. That's when you told me when I turn myself in you was too, but then I got caught up and then the next time I heard about you someone told me what happened.

I went bad at camp, went to your funeral and ran the next day. I wish you would have told me you wanted that "Five Years From Now" played at your funeral. I would have played it for you.

I still don't know the whole story. One ninja told me a bullshhh story. It sounded good for a minute but I found out he lied. It's good, I ain't mad. Never forget I love you bra. Wait for me. I'ma meet you at the crossroads fast like a OPD task car with no brakes and Marcellus driving it.

Watch over us bra. Cell, Toon In Peace.

-Lil' Naudie Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing more of your stories about your good friend, Marcellus RIP, and your pain at him losing his life. You deliver such a heartfelt tribute too. It's never too many times to write about the loss of a loved one, so keep on it. Just this once, at your request, we will respect your wishes, and the pact you made with your best friend that you would commemorate each other with "Toon In Peace" rather than "Rest in Peace" but please know that The Beat is a neutral place, where turf calls and gang names and inside jokes lose their meaning because we are all in this together, in this cycle of street violence and incarceration, regardless of color or hood or call. We can give ourselves all the special names we want, but it can't save lives, and it can't bring Marcellus back to us. Live long, Naudie Bo! In Cell's honor, make a change in your life for the better!

I'm the kind you don't trust

I'm the kind that steals

If I steal something from you

I don't care how you feel

My Struggles And Me Wanting To Change...

The struggles I go through every day
Is caused by my actions, and now I have to pay
I screwed up real bad by runnin' away
And now I'm going even farther away

I turned so much people down
Every time I get locked up I have less support
Now I realize its time for me to change

Not just for them, but for me

Right now I'm real lucky

Because I got another chance

I'm so mad I can't be in the Bay

Now I'm gon be away from my husband, uncle,

Brothers, cousins, and the rest of my friends

But I shouldn't be mad because it's my fault

Its coo' though, I got about a year to a year and a half

I'ma just knock that out

So I can have the people and things I lost back

People don't understand though why I do what I do

Sometimes I don't even understand why I do what I do

See, because I'm screwed up I'm stressing myself out

And makin' myself sad

To the people that I love after you read this you may not believe me

But all I can do now is prove to you and me

That I can and I'm willing to change

I'm tired of coming in and out of jail

I'm tired of the fast lane

So what I got to do now is get a job so that

I can make some legit money

Do my program

Get out and be a real woman

-Joann GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's good to hear you speaking so passionately and maturely about your life and your future. You've taken responsibility for your actions, and you've also recognized that you have a second chance. We hope that you take that chance and make something that you and those who know you can be proud of. We think you should cut this piece out and tape it to your mirror in your bedroom so you never forget the promises you're making to yourself and to others. You have the intelligence and the ability to do this.

Soy Un Estrano

I'm a stranger in life

But I'm really well known

To all of my homeboys

Way the back home

I'm the kind you don't trust

I'm the kind that steals

If I steal something from you

I don't care how you feel

I'm a stranger to no one

I commit a lot of felonies

I go to jail "brown and proud"

And I'm treated respectfully

I'm a stranger to my family

'Cause they can't see me grow up

If I think of how I'm hurting them

It makes me want to throw up

This is a stranger in jail

Sitting in a one man cell

Saying to myself

What is the feeling that I never ever felt

-Diablito, 150 Crew

From The Beat: From the depths of the hell of your time locked up and the thigns you've been through, you have burned and molded yourself into a true poet, a truth-teller, a person who says words others must hear and feel. And the best is that you will only get better!

Trust # 1

I didn't like any of the topics today so I made up my own topic to write about.

People are deceiving, people are two faced, and a lot of people are nothing but fakes and liars. Now why would you want to be friends, or kick it, with people like that?

I'm my own homie and best friend. I may not be able to trust myself either, but I try to keep it real with myself, and other people, as much as I can. I'm not one to talk crap, unless I receive it, or get disrespected. If I have something to say, I say it to your face, not behind your back. If I don't have proof of something I don't believe it. And it has nothing to do wit' me, or people I feel for - I don't care. And if people play games with me, or start something, I will surely play that game, and finish what that person started.

Like I said before - a majority of people on the outside, and inside here, are nothing but sorry players and immature teens. I'm not saying I'm perfect. I have my faults too, but at least I really try to grow up and be who I am. Anyway, I could say a lot more, but I think that's it for now. My point is: trust #1.

-Jessica, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You write well Jessica. We think it's good that you don't talk about people behind their backs. And it's usually good to be 'up front' with people. There is merit, also, in being tactful. If you don't know what 'tact' is, look it up in the dictionary.

The Funeral

The funeral I am scared to attend would be for one my family members. I've been to family members' funerals, a couple of them, before I came here. Every time I go to a funeral, we, as in my family, dress up to go to the funeral, and we wait for the limo to come.

I was young the first time I went, I was five, six or seven years old. As a matter of fact, I was younger than that — my dad was killed when I was a baby of one or two years. All funerals mean something to me, but it was my Big Mama's funeral that I'll never forget. She was special. When I was little, she'd take me shopping. She treated me a little different than everybody else, but in a good way. Her death was very emotional for me.

It was my mom's mom's mom who passed, and I called her Big Mama. Looking at my grandma's face I'll never forget. It was the saddest look, and I knew she was thinking about my mom. I went to my mom's mom's sister's, which is to say, my great aunt's, funeral. When I went to her funeral I can't forget how cold she was. I went to kiss her, and I remember the feel on my lips of how cold she was. I was stuck on that. I never felt anything like that. These are the main two I can remember right now.

-Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're not the only one to kiss a family member who's deceased and get stuck on the feel of the coldness of the dead body! It is a very disturbing sensation, and an unforgettable one. It is the saddest thing to lose those we love dearly, and no easier just because they were old when they died, especially if they are people we and our families have always depended on to be there for us. It breaks our hearts and shakes up our worlds.

I can't forget how cold she
was. I went to kiss her, and I
remember the feel on my lips
of how cold she was

A Trip in My Mind

Take a trip in my mind
See all that I've seen
And you'd be called a beast,
Not a human being.

"Ef" it, 'cause there's
Not much I can do
There's no way out
My screams have no voices
No matter how loud I shout

I could be called a low life
But life ain't as low as me
I'm in Juvenile Hall headed,
For the penitentiary.

-Diablito, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's amazing to read this wonderful yet tragic poem and think that English is your second language. It flows as naturally from you as if your very first words were in English. It also shows how good you are at learning new things, which means that you could learn a new way of living too - if that's something you really want. We hope so.

Value of life

To me life is very valuable. I love my mother and father, because if it wasn't for them, I would not be here today. Even though I have been messing up and making mistakes, I have to learn from them and do better in life. A lot of people don't believe it, but whether they like it or not, it's very valuable, and only you can decide on your faith.

This is what my thoughts have been, and I just wanted to lay it down on paper and share it with people, so they can value life and not take it from one another — because this stuff ain't right, 'cause people die everyday 'cause of violence! I just need to put all this out there and help, or try to help, somebody out. I mean, all I can do is give you the facts. It's up to you to take advantage of it and make something with it. All this is what everything is really about, what it all really comes down to. Sorry to say it, but it's the truth.

I hope somebody takes advantage of all this and prospers in life, makes a plan and really means it, not just to saying it and not being real about it. In other words, talking is cheap — and don't write a check your ass can't cash. This is the last stop while you're a juvenile, and the next stop is Santa Rita or San Quentin. And trust me, you don't want to go there! Late.

-Brainiak, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The advice you're giving is all good. Now we need to see you do what you should. No disrespect at all, but last time you were here you talked about all you would change, then hooked up with someone who led you back to crime — and you came back here one more time. Play time is over, and you need to believe in your own words. It has to be a no-matter-what decision with no boundaries blurred. Do right and stay free. Choose prosperity, not the penitentiary. And thanks for sharing your thoughts, 'cause you're not alone in the battle you've fought.

I love my mother and father, because if it wasn't for
them, I would not be here today

My One and Only Beat!

I have never written to The Beat before, I don't know why, so don't ask!

The reason I am writing this time is because I hope this will be my last!

I have been locked up thirteen times in the past three-and-a-half-years and I am only sixteen (seventeenth of October) the funny part is everyone says I look like I am a good girl, an angel(that's my nickname). All I have to say about that is looks are, not can be, deceiving. I mean shhhh, I'm blonde, white, and pretty, and I have done it all: burglary, robbery, assault, grinding, everything. I can keep on going but it would be a waste of paper, so I'm going to get to my point, I am very lucky, because I have only been charged with one thing, commercial burglary, and my feeling now is that God has a plan for me or else I would be in a worse situation and been caught for a whole lot more.

I have realized that it is time for me to grow up, because I feel my luck will soon run out, my advice to everyone else is don't come back here it's a waste of life (not time). You can help what you do so be smart; if you keep getting caught...I'm not good with words so I guess that's all I have to say

-Angel Baby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's really good advice—we hope someone reads it and listens. We also hope that this really is the last time and that you take your own words seriously—"a waste of life" is the perfect way to describe jail time. Hope to hear from you again, you have plenty of wisdom to spread!

For My Mom and for Myself

I cry because my mom is gone. I wish she was still here because she was the only person I had in my life. When I think about her I start to cry because I miss her so much.

When I got took to the hall I was OK but when they sent me to max unit and when they sent me to my room I sat on my bed and started to look around. Then I started to cry because I thought it was over for me. The first couple of nights up in here I was crying because I didn't know how to take it. Because I was playing football for my school and I was trying to get a scholarship to college, because that's what I promised to my mom, that I was going to college to play football and if i made it to the pros, I was going to buy her a house and a car with two pit bulls around the gate.

So that's why I cry, because I can't make that happen -- she is not here. But I am still going to make her dream come true, because when I get out I am going to football camp, and then after football camp I am going to play in the season so I can try to get a scholarship - for her and for me.

People always tell me that my mom is not gone, that she is in my heart and she will always be in my heart. "So don't think she is gone," they say, " because she is in a better place and she will always look over you from up above. She is your guardian angel.

So always keep your head up, but not down because you will make it in your life. But you will always be her son. She will always love you, and she will always keep you with her for ever more"

RIP Brenda

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We are continually inspired by the strength you show in your writing, and the determination to be something and become a person your mom would be proud of. It's great to see that you are so committed to your athletics and your future too - but as we read more and more of what you write, we also think that with that school scholarship you can also become many other things: a teacher, a writer, a businessman, maybe even a football coach who saves other kids from the troubles you've been through. Remember, your mom didn't want you to just make a lot of money, your mom wanted you to grow up proud and tall and strong. That's something that comes from being SAM, not from just being a football player. Peace!

Fighting To Live, Living To Fight

Why am I fighting to live
When I'm just living to fight
Why am I trying to see
When there ain't nothin' in sight
Why am I trying to give
When no one will give me a try
Why am I dying to live,
When I'm just living to die.

-Treyhook, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We love the way you twisted this poem around. Each line says you're trying to do something right, every line right afterwards shows you battling something that does you wrong, all twisted around each other like a verbal braid. See, with skills like that, you can win that battle. Life is always a struggle between right and wrong, good and bad, trying to find a way to live against all odds. What would it take for you to live to live?

He Had My Back

The ninja that had my back when all them ninjaz was
hating
and waiting to shed blood when ninjas was trying take it.
I wish time could turn back, but it's something it can't do
'cause I'd show you, I should be in a coffin and not you.
These emotions I'm feeling, I ain't trying to breakdown
and crush
but if I was there, I would have been in place of the truck
now I'm feeling guilty, 'cause I wasn't even around.
Like if I was there, your heart'll still be beatin' right now.
That's how he wanted it, and it's something I can't fix
like hearing voices when I sleep saying my life is next.
In the ambulance, the doctor said you didn't make it
but I can't forget all the blood laying on the pavement
you my ninja... you always said to keep it true.
If I had to live for a human, the human would a been you.
So I'm giving you tribute to the life God made
'cause you was like a brother with different blood
like the color you claimed.

-Loving Brother, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Does the death of your "brother with different blood" make you think any differently about claiming colors? Is it worth it to die for a color, a block, or set? A lot of gangs make it seem like they are protecting their 'hoods, but it seems like just the opposite. Would you trade the fate of your brother and so many others like him for the lifestyle you choose? Our hope is that young people like yourself think about the ways in which they can positively change their own lives, and maybe even the lives of others.

... it seems like after the funeral everybody back to doing the same-ass shhhh. Back to living they same-ass life until you hear about somebody else getting killed.

Preparing For A Funeral

The funerals I have been to affected me in a negative way because I ain't going to a funeral unless it's my family or somebody that's close to me. And to see them dead after I knew them would really hurt me. I been to so many funerals it's mainie.

Preparing myself for a funeral is hard. It's so much I be going through, but it seems like after the funeral everybody back to doing the same-ass shhhh. Back to living they same-ass life until you hear about somebody else getting killed.

-Muck GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The last line of your piece is one of the most profound responses we've heard on this topic. Why do you think that people go back to doing the same ol' shhhh, even when they know it will lead to more deaths? Why do so many people your age seem to have no value for human life, including their own? We would love to hear more of your thoughts on this topic in the next Beat.

Uncomfortable

I feel that I have felt most uncomfortable in many different ways while being here at Juvenile hall.

First physically it is uncomfortable because you can't sleep how you want to or feel physically fresh compared to how you would feel normally when you're at home. Mentally for me it is uncomfortable also because I feel better in an environment where I am like and not looked down upon.

It is also uncomfortable for me not to know how my family is doing and what I have put them through emotionally by coming and being here.

-Cj, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's a long list of discomforts. We hope you hear from your family and that when you get out you enjoy the comforts of home so much that you never make it back to jail.

I respect you more than ever
I want to do right more than ever
I want you to have peace forever

Touched By Love/ More Than Ever

I knew I had been touched by love...

The first time I saw you and I felt
Your warmth and heard your laughter.

I knew I had been touched by love
When I was hurting from something
That happened, and you came along
And made the hurt go away feel inside

I knew I had been touched by love
When I quit making plans with my friends and started
dreaming dreams
with you after.

More than ever

I love you more than ever
I admire you more than ever
I like you more than ever

I respect you more than ever
I want to do right more than ever
I want you to have peace forever

-Brandon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're just so glad that someone has touched you so deeply. Love is a powerful thing...

Funeral Thoughts

I've been to many funerals in the course of my life: aunts, my uncles, my grandpas and grandmas my cousins and my close friends.

When I walk into a funeral its like the smell of roses just takes my breath away. I used to get high before funerals until I got the notion that when one gets high at a funeral its just like celebrating somebody death. And to me that's not what I want to be there for.

-Mourner , 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's important to celebrate the life of someone who just died, and that's different from celebrating their death. In any case, it's probably better to be in your right mind so that you can be present in honoring that person.

Fantasies

Grab my hand and trust me babe.

Me and you somewhere far making love under the stars
Somewhere out of sight, everything will be just right.

I'm telling you girl I can do this all night long.

Now you in my bed looking all sexy as hell with your legs spread.

Running my fingers through your hair while I'm taking you to another world.

I'm telling you girl, brothers like me come rare.

Can't you see you are the one for me baby.

Take my hand and step on the boat with a destination around the world.

Only you and just for you because you are my only girl.
Or we can soar real real high through the sky or do it all the way until sunrise.

It don't matter to me what we do because all I know is I'm down for you.

Take my hand and take this walk along the shoreline through the sand.

Now I got you out your bathing suit watch and learn what we do.

Now we on the beach to the sound of the soothing sea.

My name is the only thing you'll know, it's so good
Fantasies are what they seem but one day girl you will know what I mean.

I need you girl your pretty smile just drives me wild.
Now baby close your eyes and fantasies just one time about you and I.

I'm telling you girl I'll rock your world but to me it ain't all about the pearl.

Stick by my side and watch us rise to the very top.
Watch them try to anchor us down, no matter what we'll still be around.

Don't get it twisted I'm not in love with a stripper or a ripper but I am in love with a keeper.
So baby let's make it official you and me and travel the seven seas.

I don't care what they say you are my girl and you are my world.

I respect your mind and body I promise girl I'll never call you "B" again.

When you walk down the hallway with your friends I can stare at you all damn day.
You so damn fine I just want you to myself and nobody else.
Now we on a hill watching the city and bridge illuminated by the glimmering lights.

Close your eyes and kiss me girl and just make everything perfect and right.

I know it's a lot of ninjas with animosity towards me because I wrote this piece.

So forget all ya'll and recognize game.

But I got one question for my lady before I go to sleep.

Do you see an opulent and triumphant future for us?

-Lil' Toot, 150 Crew

From the Beat: Wow, those are some intense feelings. The ladies in the office just want you to know that a girl's favorite thing to hear is that you respect her. It's even better than hearing how much you're going to rock her world or where you're going to take her. So keep it up with the respect and you'll do fine.

Stick by my side
and watch us rise to the very top.

RIP Ray Ray

When I attended Ray Diddy's funeral, I felt like I lost somebody important. Losing Ray Ray was bad because I lost a big bro. I miss Ray Ray because I don't have nobody to cheer for me at my basketball games. He taught me how to shoot a ball in the net.

People used to always see us together and thought we went out. But being with Ray Ray was cool 'cause he always call me his "lil one" and treat me like his little sis. Always making beats on the table at school. Writing poems so you could turn 'em into rap songs.

I would never erase you from my life. Rest In Peace Ray Ray.

-Lil' One GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a beautiful RIP. Many people continue to keep Ray Ray in their hearts. Has his death changed anything about how you want to live your life?

I Miss You

You were my step-dad but in my heart you were my dad. You protected me since I was 3. My real dad wasn't around. You were there though. You were my father. You raised your voice when I did wrong and I respected you for it.

All them times you left mom after a fight I never let go, so why did you let go of me, huh?

All them times I called the ambulance for you 'cause your liver went bad after all those years of drinking; I never let go. I believed you were gonna make it when the doctors said you weren't. And you did.

But the last time you gave up. I felt it too. So did mom. I held your hand when you did. Why did you leave? I know you're by my side though. I know you're smiling down. I miss you and I love you. You will always be in my heart.

RIP Pete Loaiza.

-Elizabeth GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What a beautifully written, but very sad piece. We're so sorry you lost the man who was truly the father in your life. You were a true and good daughter to him, and we know he felt you by his side as he passed from this world. Now, make him proud and do good in your life.

Funerals Make Me Uneasy

I feel uneasy going to funerals. I'm so impatient that I can't stand to see any of my dead homies lying there in a casket or their ashes knowin' that those ashes were you at one point. But living through as many deaths as I have, I've sometimes wished I could be wit' 'em, but I can't because it wasn't my time to die. I've learned to move on and accept it.

There ain't nothing else to do but live yo' life and don't take the same path that got yo' homies got. They sho' as hell wouldn't want you to die anytime, so they wont you to live life to the fullest 'cause it's just too short.

-Bo B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What makes us uncomfortable at funerals is the recognition, somewhere deep in our brains, that this will be our fate one day too. We're sorry that you've had to experience so many funerals, but we're giving you props for recognizing the importance (and brevity) of life. Yes, live to the fullest, but not in a way that threatens your health or your freedom or your life itself.

Naturally, I'd Call Mom

If I had anyone's phone # I could only call one person: it would most positively be my mom. Why? Because she's always been there for me when I was in trouble or if I ever needed her.

Even if I just wanted to hang out or go to the movies I'd call my mom because she's the woman who gave birth to me and she's the woman who wants me out of YGC. She's the one that loves me. She's always going to be there for me. She's my very own best friend. I could talk to her about everything and anything.

I love her so much because my mom is doing all she could just to get me out of YGC. She loves me and she wants me home. That's why I would call my mom. She's never let me down and if my mother needed anything, all she had to do was ask. Or if I wasn't home she could always call my cell phone.

I'd also call my mom and tell her how much I LOVE her and how much I MISS her. As long as she knew I'd be a okay! P.S. To the most wonderful mother...Everything I do is twice as nice with YOU!

-B-nugget GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You say that if your mom every needed anything, all she has to do is ask. So, how will you deliver what she really needs, which is you at home with her? We don't doubt your obvious love, but we have said it before and we'll say it again: the true test of love is not in the words we speak, but in the acts we do. The best expression of your love is to find a way to live without risking being taken away.

Phone Number

I would have my house phone number 'cause that's where my family is, but most of all that's everybody who loves me and wants me back, the way I used to be, without using any drugs. Just the old Franky that they still but not almost remember before they lost me.

-Franky, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is sad and wonderful. We hope you get the right number soon, Franky, the right number to a happy and healthy life.

What Ifs

My life is worth everything but I live for nothing. I feel that I am dying to live but I'm just living to die, so I don't show no emotion and hide my fears. So I walk with a mug and a limp, fou' slugs struck in my hip. Everywhere, I'm looking over my shoulder. I have no friends 'cause friends will get you killed. I trust no one but big bro.

It's like I am in a room an' all four walls just closing in on me. So I stop and think, what it I never brought that bb gun to school when I was in the 3rd grade? What if I never got caught with that .22 and .380? What if I was never down wit' 280? But those are all "what ifs." I am in this position now and in the hole, and every time I get a lil' out, it start to rain. Then I slip to the bottom of the pit like shhh. Not this again.

But I know my life is worth everything, but I live for nothing. I am dying to live but I'm just living to die.

-The Truth B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The real truth is that if you are living for nothing, then nothing is what you're going to get. If you are truly dedicated to trying to pull yourself out of the hole you've dug for yourself, then we bet that each time you start to pull yourself out but slide back in the rain, you do not slide all the way to the bottom of the pit, but only part of the way down. So each time, you move a little closer to getting out of the hole altogether. Think of how much people have had to endure over the ages — slavery, the holocaust, war, disease, starvation — and don't let a little (or a lot of) rain keep you down!

There ain't nothing else to do but live yo' life and don't take the same path that got yo' homies got.

Too Many Funerals

I've been to too many funerals. Too many of my friends and my family is dying. We got to find a way to stop this, for real. Uncle Sam needs to stop putting guns into the community and dope and stuff.

We need to organize a boycott and everybody stop buying dope. I don't use dope myself.

What I can do is avoid the people that are trying to sell me dope, sell me guns. I can move to a new environment and make new choices. I can get a job and start making real money, maybe doing construction work.

-DSHa B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Do you think it is the government which is supplying guns to your community? Why do they want to do that? We love the idea of a dope boycott, but we can't see how it would work. The only people who would obey the boycott are people like you who don't use dope! But what we really like is your description of what you can do to make your life a full and meaningful one by getting a job and making money for you and your family. Good for you!

Peer Pressure

I'm writing about an uncomfortable time I was with my friends and they kept trying to force me to do crack and shhh. He was asking and asking until finally my friend did it. I knew he didn't want to but it was called peer pressure.

-Lil' Too Crazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your story confirms that peer pressure is not a myth adults invented but a real thing. Why do you think people pressure others into doing things, especially bad-for-you things? Have you ever caved in to peer pressure? How did it feel?

Madness

It's a lot of madness going on in the Bay. It's sad that damn near every time my mom would turn on the news, it would be somebody I know or knew or knew of. I lost a lot of friends or associates. I knew like one of my little patna from West Oakland got shot and killed for being at the wrong place at the wrong time. He was only thirteen.

Another time when my patna got shot for robbin' the Cannabis Club in San Leandro, it was crazy how people was blamin' people I knew, all because they didn't come to the funeral, and how I had to tell some of the people who didn't know what happened, to stop talkin' if they didn't know what they was talkin' about.

I told them, "We already lost one. We don't need no mo' to go." And the people who was talkin' the most about how they was goin' to have a picture on their shirts and pants, they never got it — and I was one of only a few us, to have his hoody made.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Props on saying what needed to be said when those fools at your homie's funeral started spreading murderous rumors. Just how full of bull they were, was proven by their empty words about showing respect for you fallen homie by sporting a hoody with his picture in loving memory. That's bad enough, but when these loudmouthed fools spread bull that could get someone killed, it's about as low as a fool can go. The madness must be stopped, and stopping it starts with fools stopping their mouths from talking about what they don't know.

Funerals (RIP Cell)

The last funeral I went to was my bra Marcellus.

All bad
seein' my bra layin' there
all gone
even though he was in peace
I will never get over it.
I love and miss you bra
please be restin' in peace.

-Lil' Naudie Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're so glad you were able to get out for Marcellus' funeral. Though it's a painful memory, it's so important that you were there. And although the choices you made after that funeral are all bad, we can only believe from this point forward you will make better choices when it comes to your freedom.

Funerals

There is a difference when an elderly person dies and you attend the funeral whether it be a family member or a neighbor or even a family friend.

When a friend you have known all your life gets killed or dies it really hurts, because the way you see it is that they still had a long life to live and they had so much to look forward to.

-Patrick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You speak truth! At an elderly person's funeral you can celebrate the wonderful life they lived, while at a young person's funeral you can only wonder.

Camp Sweeney

What's up with it Beat and fellow convicts? This is Sharky, puttin' it down in Alameda County. Now that I'm at Camp, I wanna say what's up to everyone in my old unit back in the Hall, staff too. I'm doing hella good up here at Camp. I got my GED in two weeks! Passed my high school exit exam, math: 375, and English: 393. I graduated from Cornerstone, an architectural program here at Camp. I'm a kitchen worker and eatin' hella fat! I'm doing hella sports and hella programs.

I just wanna say to all of you comin' up here to Camp, don't run and escape, 'cause it ain't worth it. You can do hella things up here to start getting your life back on track. And fighting and stuff up here, that's a joke. More than half of the people up here talk hella trash and can't even fight. It's like a Chihuahua barking. I mean, there have been fights but nothing that i can really say was a fight.

So just come up here, do your program and go home! Do the math real quick: if you run, it will probably be for only three months, and then another three months at the Hall — and that's a six-month program right there! Then you'll get another eight-or-whatever month program at YA! My point is that all you're doing is cheating yourself if you run — the temptation to run is just a trap to keep you in the system longer! It's too easy up here! If you can't handle this biz, you better not go to YA or the pen', 'cause you'll be a straight sucka, real talk, if you can't handle Camp.

Well, yeah, I'm doing hella good. I'm gonna try to start getting my AA form the University of Phoenix online! I'm out though. Y'all stay up and don't let no otha dude push up on ya! But now if you're a child molester, maybe you don't want to come to Camp, 'cause you won't be too popular up here. You feel?

-Sharky, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We definitely will make no excuses for child molestation, 'cause there are none. It flat-out should not happen. Anyone and everyone has seems to have strong feelings on that topic — but threatening to hurt someone who made a mistake and is trying to change is just adding a further wrong to the first one. And no one at Camp is really in any position to be judging anyone else's sins. Just take responsibility for what you do and what you have done in this world. What about that time an expectant mother smoked a rock you sold, or whatever? And how is your example helping young people stay out of trouble, out of jail and out of graveyards? So, major props to you for all your doing at Camp. You're doing great! And that's being a role model a youngster can look up to and follow. Just keep doing right and you'll be a spotlight in the night sky, showing a better way to live today, and pointing to a better tomorrow. Thanks for writing a great piece about Camp and all you've achieved since you've been there, and all of your advice is good. Again, major props!

This Hurt

Man I've been to too many funerals,
when I go I be the hottest person there,
because I think 'bout everything
that I been through wit' that person and that makes me
mad
that they're not here anymore,
just seein' there face for the last time just kills me,
'cause like the last funeral I went to,
seein' my best friend,
just seein' him like that
in a casket
not smiling
like he always did,
I couldn't take it.
We used to talk bout the future
and to see him for the last time
and know that I will never see him again
man that shhh ain't cool on the real,
every time I think bout my bra Gerell I feel like doin'
anything,
I just don't give a shhh 'cause he wasn't suppose to go.
Man I miss you bra bra Gerell W.!

-Hurting, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Saying goodbye forever can be the hardest, most painful thing to do. Especially when death comes to people so young and it seems so senseless. Why are so many young people dying such violent deaths? What's the answer young brother?

The Topic At Hand Is Funerals-

I went to a funeral recently for a friend of mine and it was hard to accept because I had just seen him two days before he was murderd over some stupid shhh, excuse my language, but I can't find any other way of expressing myself.

His funeral affected me because he was close to my age and he was a homeboy from my hood. He didn't do anything to deserve what happened to him. It opened my eyes to the dangers of life on the streets, it didn't make me wanna change but I don't walk down the street ignorant to what could happen to me, so if my time comes it won't be of negligence on my part.

I don't really prepare myself too much besides emotionally because I never like breakin' down, even by myself when no one is around.

After the funeral I get together with those who knew the person who passed and we drink the night away talking about the good times.

Well that's all I can say on the topic so peace out everybody. RIP to the homie Arturo.

-Young L, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes it's good for you to break down a little, either by yourself or with a loved one. It's hard to let all of that emotion out, but sometimes it helps to do it. You can figure stuff out a lot better when strong, confusing feelings aren't just bottled up inside.

This Is Not The Place

The bay is not a place for young kids to grow up at 'cause you end up in the hall or you end up dead on the streets or on the block sellin' them rocks or them grapes. I just want to tell them lil' youngstas to stay off the block and stay in school, don't end up like me in the hall. No one will come see me not even my mom so stay in school and don't be a fool.

-Lil' Tune, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your words will touch the lives of many Beat readers! Thank you for sharing the wisdom of your mistakes, and for seeing and understanding them clearly.

Grandma's Phone Call

If I had my Grandma's phone number, I would let her know that I miss her, even though she wanted me to go see her before she was dying in that bed and I couldn't make it on time.

I still remember when my auntie called my mom and told her those words that Mama Alvisa was on her last hours. I remember how my mom was so mad that she couldn't go, and a minute later that phone rang and it was my auntie telling my mom that Gramma wanted to see me. "I want to see mi hijo, Arturo. Bring him please, please." I still remember that day.

So if I had my grandma's phone number, I would call her and tell her that she will always stay in mi corazon. I know where she is — she's looking at me in this moment. And I know she's proud of me.

-Statther, 150 Crew

From The Beat: She's proud of you because you're here doing a good program and heading toward living a better life on the outs, staying out of trouble, going to school and making her proud as she follows your successes today, tomorrow and in the future. Thanks for a moving piece. It's sad you didn't get to see her that day she called for you, but as you say, she's still watching you.

Hella Funerals

Me personally, I have been to hella funerals for patnas and family members. A funeral for me is a time to realize that the person is actually gone and that I will never see them again.

I don't really do anything to prepare myself for a funeral. Usually after a funeral I just kick back relax and think of all the memories me and that person shared together.

Sometimes going to funerals and seeing the persons body laying in there casket is uncomfortable, because I think about how we use to kick it and chill what seems just like the other day and now they're dead and gone. Like when I had to see my grandma in her casket, that was uncomfortable.

-Young Weezy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's the strangest thing about death—the permanence of it, that something could happen and wham, it's final. We can never go back or bring that person back, no matter how much you can't imagine the world without them. Memories are like precious little time capsules then.

God's Number

If I had anyone number I would want God's number so I could call and talk to Him to ask Him for another chance to change my ways. Also to ask for another chance to do better and just get out of jail.

Also I would talk to Him to ask to help my mother out because she is getting up in that age that she needs to rest. But she just acts like she young and just be out doing things for the house. I try to help but she tells me I don't need to. So I would just ask God to tell her to sit down and rest and take some time out for herself.

Another thing when I would call God is that I would ask Him to just help me out with some of my problems that I have. One of the problems that I have is hanging with the wrong people. I would just ask him to guide me in the right direction, like when I see them he tell me in my head to turn the other way and just go about my own thing. And just take care of what I have to do. Also just go to school get good grades and just go to work and take care of my mom.

-Romell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like someone is already telling you to look the other way and go to school and change your ways. Maybe your relationship with god already exists and you just aren't listening. It's really helpful to have faith and spirituality when we're trying to do things that seem impossible, but we can't wait around for the god we believe in to reach down and do the work for us—or we'd be waiting around in the same rut forever. We believe that you can make some of the changes you talk about—but don't wait. Good luck and let us know how it goes.

Where I Am From

i am from the streets
of oakland
where it goes down
you know it goes down
in the town
i am from north oakland
born and raised
i am from the soulfood
my granny cook
and the real stuff she says
i am from the streets
where gang bangers hang
in front stores
i am from the streets
where we ride scrapers
on twenty-two's
that where i am from
i am from a no-good father
who did not give a damn
about what kind of
young man
i would be

-D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So why let a no-good father like that seal your fate. It's important to know where you're from, but it doesn't mean you can't rise above — keep the best and leave the rest. Coming to jail is one thing you can leave behind, but that means you need to find a better way to make money than the street grind. We know you can do it if you put your mind willpower to it.

It's A Blessing

i notice every day
that people don't realize
that they are blessed
so look
people lay down every night
and some don't wake up
and god allows us to wake
that is a blessing
also people don't look at
the little blessings
like when you wake up
being able to talk and walk
or hearing or seeing
see those are blessings
we need to start realizing that
i do
what about you
that's all i got for today
god bless
love,

-Rev.do, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is so hard to focus on the small yet precious blessings in life, especially in a place like Camp with all the mouths spouting static and bull in your face all day long. Then when you're finally alone and quiet, sometimes you're just worn out by all these fools, and don't know how to see just how blessed your life can be if you can only see through to the simple reality that's there for you to appreciate day in and day out. Some practice rediscovering that blessing in prayer and/or meditation at the end and/or start of every day. Thanks for the reminder.

Young Hard Life

What's up my name is Bryant aka White Chocolate. When I was nine my momma didn't want me no more so she kicked me out. Ever since then I've made my own money by sellin' drugs. When I turned thirteen I started slangin' rocks; I was doin' good until i got caught by the police an I got locked up for nine months.

When I got out I started gettin scared because coke was my only money but I didn't wanna get locked up so I started sellin' weed and smoking weed and robbin' people to make my money, now I'm locked up.

No, I don't know when I'm getting out so if you eva think about robbin' some fools don't 'cause you gonna be in my position, you gonna be wishin' you didn't.

-Bryant, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's some good advice. It's too bad you had to learn that lesson on your own. -We wish it could have been different for you, but it seems like maybe you have a different outlook now. We hope you learn from your experience and turn things around for yourself. Let us know how it goes for you.

We may fight, argue, and get mad
But in the end of it shouldn't result in the both
of us being sad.

A Title of Thoughts

Not a title of violence
Not a title of crime
But a title of thoughts
That come to mind.
They say actions speak louder than words
But some actions we just don't deserve
We may fight, argue, and get mad
But in the end of it shouldn't result in the both of us
being sad.
I like it when we're both happy, it feels good.
But we still talk to each other. Like we're in the hood.
When we go out it's not a fashion show
Because you try to impress me but make yourself
look a hoe
And what's the point of lip gloss?
Does it make you feel like you're flossing?
Because guess what, it's really all --
False!
When it's just the two of us you're so sweet and
caring.
But why all these questions about babies
Are you preparing?

-James, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You and your girl are walking a rocky road aren't you? The love is all there, but so is the conflict and drama. Is part of the problem the fact that you're locked up? Does that put stress on your situation?

Only One Apology

My life changed when I decided I didn't give a *&^% no more
My life changed when I started smoking grapes.
My life changed when I got jumped into the hood

And most of all my life changed when my baby moma started smoking crack.

I wish I could change all that. But the fact that I don't give a shhh is the problem, so yes when I hit the Y I'm going to Max out. I'm not sorry about my crimes, none of that shhh. The person I'm truly apologetic to is my mom for putting her through this, I really love her.

-Ricky, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A lot of times, we hear people say they don't care, but then they sound like maybe it's not that they don't care, but that they care too much. If you feel helpless can't do anything to change what's messed up, the easiest thing to do is say "I don't care" but we think - and hope - that you truly do care!

Really, Really Uncomfortable

A place I really feel uncomfortable is where I am stuck at right now.

Being locked up is all-bad. For starters, your food tastes like crap. You don't get to see your friends or family, you have to ask permission to use the bathroom or get water, you got to shower shoulder to shoulder with the next naked man, and wear the same nasty underwear that the next person was wearing and sweating in yesterday, you get locked in a small room with another person, and that to me is a really uncomfortable situation.

Even though I put myself into this position, it is a really, really uncomfortable time.

-Uncomfortable detainee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel like if we just put this piece out as a flier on the streets, or tacked it up to some streetlights and telegraph poles, people might think twice about committing crimes. It's no way to live, is it?

La Cosa Más Triste Que He Tenido

La cosa más triste que he tenido y nomas tengo es una foto y un video de mi prima que se murio. Su nombre es Isabell Cisneros aka Chavela. Ella era la prima que más adoraba y se murio el 6/26/2005. Yo estoy escribiendo de ella porque mucha persona la querían y la conocían. Chavela no tenía problemas con nadie. Ella era una persona que le gustaba hacer reír a la gente. Todo lo que tengo de ella es una foto. Yo quiero a mi prima mucho con toda mi alma. Por eso me puse su nombre en mi mano. Yo con una promesa mía la cual era que iba a ser bien para que estemos juntas afuera. Pero unos meses antes me dijeron que había muerto. Que culero la neta! Yo no sabía que hacer. Me estaba volviendo loca, porque tenía un tiempo sin verla y luego se murio. Yo en ese tiempo estaba en girls program y me dieron un homepass y la fui a ver. Mi prima decía esto, "well buddy life goes on." No es tan facil, se toma tiempo y voy a vivir con este dolor toda mi vida. No quiero estar aqui en el día del año. Ya me debo de ir. Al rato y espero que les guste mi tema. Es la cosa más triste que tengo. RIP Chavela, Lil' Guero, y todos los que se murieron.

From The Beat: Es bien doloroso perder a alguien que uno quiere mucho. Es un sentimiento muy pesado que ahoga. Hay que tener en mente que así es la vida que vivimos, un día nacemos o en el otro nos vamos. Como ella dijo, la vida sigue y lo que quiere decir ella es que no importa lo que pase uno siempre tiene que seguir adelante, sin ver atras, no importando lo que haya de obstaculos. Ahora, sigue el consejo de ella. Estamos seguro que donde sea que ella esté esta deseando que tú estes bien y esperando que sigas el camino que necesitas para alejarte de todo lo negativo. ¿Te servira esta experiencia en tu futuro?

The Saddest Thing That I Have Ever Had

The saddest thing that I have ever had and only have is a photo and a video of my cousin who died. Her name is Isabell aka Chavela. She was the cousin that I adored the most and she died on 06/26/2005. I am writing about her because many people loved her and knew her.

Chavela didn't have any problems with anyone. She was a person that liked to make people laugh. The only thing that I have of her is a photo. I love my cousin a lot with all my soul. That's why I put her name on my hand. I had made a promise which was I was going to do well so we could be together on the outs, but a couple of months before that happened, they told me that she had died.

The truth is, that was hella messed up! I didn't know what to do. I was going crazy because I hadn't seen her for a while and then she died. I, at that time, was in a girls program and they gave me a home pass and I went to go see her. My cousin would say this: "Well Buddy, life goes on." It's not that easy. It takes time and I am going to live with this pain all my life. I don't want to be in here on her one-year anniversary. I should be going soon.

I'll holla at y'all later and I hope y'all like my topic. That is the saddest thing that I have. RIP Chavela, Lil' Guero, and everyone who has died.

-Jennifer

From The Beat: It's very painful to lose someone that you love very much. It's a very heavy feeling to swallow. One has to keep in mind that's how the life we live is. One day we're born, on another, we go. Like she said, "Life goes on," and what she is trying to say is, it doesn't matter what happens to someone, one always has to continue forward without looking back, regardless of what obstacles lay ahead. Now, follow her words of advice. We're positive that wherever she may be, she is hoping that you are well and waiting for you to follow the path that you need to take so you can distance yourself from all negative things. Will this experience serve you in the future?

Christ Rap

Chorus:

write a new hit every week for the beat within
on my knees pray to god when i'm committin sin
not my partners or my friends
only trust my kin
and every time i leave the hall i think never again
that all depends
on the situations stacked against me
and every time i get released i think purple, pills, and...
all depends on the situations stacked against me
every time i get released i think purple, pills, and...

Verse:

if i only have a penny then i'm givin a cent
but whats the point of going to god if you ain't gone repent
'cause all men fall short of the gorly of god
but if you think your things like that sound odd
oh my gosh
i thought nobody was better than me
until i heard we all sin and jesus died for me
on calvary
i stop thinking 'bout double d's
makin money by any means
i'm redirecting my energy
to doing things that'll make him pleased
pray (really pray)
what i'm here on this earth for is yet to be seen
he made him, you, and i so he has to be king
he reigns supreme
made all of us equal
george bush ain't no better than a ninja snortin' cream
that's basically the same thing
but who am i to judge
like jesus christ i'ma fight the enemy wit love
wit the holy ghost i'ma always rise above

Chorus:

i say like jesus christ you say i'ma fight the enemy wit' love
wit' the holy ghost you say i'ma always rise above

-Be Eazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We agree that situations can sometimes be stacked against a person, and it might seem like all of your problems come from a big conspiracy to keep you down, but taking responsibility for your own choices is important. For instance, the word you chose to use in the line "every time i get released..." -the word we left out because of it's vulgar, degrading tone. It's odd that you chose to use that particular word because the rest of the piece is really uplifting and strong. We especially like the part about fighting the enemy with love. Minus the use of that one particular word, we really appreciate your piece.

Depressed All Day

Hey what's up Beat, this is Diego, just speaking my mind. Today is Tuesday, and I've been depressed all day just thinking that I could be locked up for like 8 years. That shhh ain't cool. Man, I wish I could go back to my childhood and know what I know now. I would change so many things, starting with my education - I never would have quit school.

Man, being here is so depressing, especially when you got people in the outside that love you. I can't write no more.

To all y'all that still got a lot of chances. Take good advantage of them. Well, I'm gone.

-Diego, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We've seen days when your spirits were up, and days when they were down. This was definitely a down day - when it sounds like your hope was lagging, but all we can say is it's never too late to change, never too late to get an education. We know people who spent ten, twenty years locked up, and then came out of it stronger and ready to take on the struggle and working their way back to their dreams. We know people who rediscovered their relationships with their children, people who turned around and became authors, journalists, artists, blessings to their communities. And best of all, we know people who turned jail into an opportunity to educate and open their minds, learn and read about the world and their place in it. You could be one of those people, Diego. Listen to your own advice, and take good advantage, because in the big picture, you still have chances too.



Cuando Te Sientes Mal

Te sientes mal cuando estas solo, sin consuelo, sin amor de una familia y cuando no te hablan, no saludan, ni te dan apoyo.

Lo que yo le diría a mi vida es que si yo tubiera una niña o niño, yo le diría que se dirigieran a la vida buena, que hagan lo bueno y que no hagan lo que yo hice.

Como deseara volver a nacer yo dirigirme a las cosas buenas y tambien hacerles caso a mis padres, hermanos y abuelo, y dejar de hacer las cosas malas que hice.

Me mantubiera fuerte cuando esas personas me den la espalda, como pidiendole consejos a mi madre, para poder obtener consejo y saber que debo cambiar. Si tu confias en quien no debe confiar siempre vas a sentirte solo, sin Consuelo, sin amor. Vas a sentirte que no vales la pena como yo me he sentido, sin tener alguien quien me de la mano.

From The Beat: Primeramente, ¿quien dice que es tarde para realizar las cosas que no has hecho, hacerle caso a lo que dices tu madre? ¿Acaso tu vida ya termino al haber caido aqui? Todo tiene cura excepto la muerte. Una vez que nuestras vidas se pierde nada mas se puede hacer. Pero tú tienes toda una vida por delante. Tienes a tu familia y amigos quienes te pueden apoyar a dirigir tu camino. Sabemos que se siente mal cuando alguien te da la espalda, pero el mundo sigue y todos tenemos que continuar con o sin ayuda de alguien.

When You Feel Bad

You feel bad when you are all alone, without comfort, without the love of a family and when they don't talk to you, they don't greet you, nor do they give you support.

What I would say to my life is if I had a daughter or a son, I would tell them to direct his/herself to the good life, to do what's good, and to not do what I did.

Oh how I would love to be reborn so I could direct myself to good things and also obey my parents, brothers, and grandfather, and stop doing the bad things that I did.

I would keep myself strong when those people turn their backs on me, like asking my mother for advice, so I can be able to obtain advice and to know that I have to change. If you confide in whom you should not confide in, you're always going to feel alone, without comfort, without love. You're going to feel that you're not worth anything like you have felt before, not having someone there to extend their hand to you.

-Rene B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: First of all, who says that it is too late to realize the things that you haven't done and to obey what your mother says? Or has your life come to an end now that you are in here? Everything has its cure except for death. Once our lives are lost, nothing can be done about it, but you have your whole life ahead of you. You have your family and friends who can support you to begin directing your path. We know it feels bad when someone turns their back on you, but the world keeps spinning and we all have to continue with or without the help of someone.

If my mom was here

If my mom was here I would kick it with her.

If my mom was here I would not be here.

If my mom was here I would be a different person.

If my mom was here my family would be different.

If my mom was life I wouldn't be living with my grandparents.

If my mom was here I would go to the movies with her.

If my mom was here my dad wouldn't be in jail.

If my mom was here my bra wouldn't be in jail.

If my mom was here she would be my best friend.

If my mom was here my lil sister would know who she is.

If my mom was here I could tell her I love her.

-Loving Son, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's so hard to be missing someone so much, and it's easy to think that if they were here, things would be completely different. We are really, truly sorry that your mom isn't around, but we hope you don't wait to change the things you can on your own. Could you do good because you know that's what she would want-to see you doing well?

No Place Like Home

This is my last time in juvenile hall. I need to be home, with family helping them get through tough times.

My mom be visiting me with a lot of bad news. I want to comfort her and hug her.

This place is not for me, I realize that everyday. Sometimes at night I can't sleep and I'm up all night. All I can think about is what's going on outside these walls. I pray for better days, and keep my head up. This same routine everyday gives me nothing to look forward to. I go to court in a week and I'm hoping for a release a lot of people depend on me on the outs. Me coming to jail affects people besides myself. This is no way for a prince to live.

-Prince, 150 Crew

from The Beat: Long sleepless nights can really make a person think, can't they. Good luck at your court date, we hope you get to go home and work on things with your family.

Fresh Start

Hey what's up wit' it Beat this yo' boy T-Bone writing yet another week inside the walls of juvenile hall. This week it's different though, because it's my last week. Three, almost two more days.

(Being that its 8:30pm) now it's time to put to use all what I've been taught. The lessons learned, things I promised myself. Not saying I'm just now going to start doing what I said I would do, because I have already put to use my lessons learned. Humility, honesty, responsibility, stuff I need to accomplish my goals in life. I'm so... so ready to start off fresh. Walk into my new life as a new young man. Sober, and responsible, determined, focused, and most of all saved! I'm prepared mentally, physically, and most of all spiritually. God gave me a chance to get my life together with Him, and I'm taking it. Taking it before I'm forced to, my deathbed or sum.

I appreciate The Beat and all your staff for publishing my work and giving me an opportunity to write my feelings out on paper. Appreciate you all, and to all a good night. Stay up Beat readers and get it together.

-T-Bone, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We wish you the best T-Bone. We can see how much growing you've been doing and know you'll keep it up. Thank you for the appreciation, but we want you to know that we appreciate you and your fellow Beat writers and readers more than we could ever say.

Queridos Nietos/Nietas

Queridos nietos/nietas, no quiero que vayan a vivir la vida que yo he vivido porque es una vida desastrosa. Uno vende drogas, uno roba carros y no quiero que ustedes vayan a ser lo mismo que yo. ¿Como creen que yo vine a caer a la cárcel? Pues por andar en tonterías de juventud. Por eso quiero que ustedes piensen en otras cosas como estudiar, hacerles caso a sus padres. Quiero que no hagan cosas de la que he hecho porque no quiero que caigan en la cárcel por andar vendiendo droga, robando esterios, o carros. Yo he estado en la juvenil y no quiero que pasen por esto.

From The Beat: Esperamos que llegues a guardar esta carta para que ellos lean tus expresiones y preocupaciones. Estamos seguro que seras un buen abuelo y que tus nietos te respetaran siempre y cuando te den tu respeto. ¿Crees que ellos lleguen a estar orgullosos de tener un buen abuelo? ¿Que se necesita para ser un buen abuelo?

Dear Grandson/Granddaughter

Dear grandson/granddaughter, I don't want y'all to live the kind of life that I have lived because it is a disastrous life. One sells drugs, one robs cars, and I don't want y'all to do the same things that I did.

Why do y'all believe I ended up going to jail? Well, for going around and doing stupid juvenile things. That's why I want y'all to think about other things like studying and listening to your parents. I don't want y'all to do the things that I have done because I don't want y'all to land in jail for going around and selling drugs, robbing stereos, or cars. I've been in Juvenile and I don't want y'all to go through this.

-Oscar B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope that you end up saving this piece so they can read your expressions and worries. We're positive that you will be a good grandfather and that your grandchildren will always respect you and will give you the respect you deserve. Do you believe that they will end up being proud of having such a good grandfather? What do you think it takes to be a good grandfather?

The Pain You/I See

You see your girlfriend/boyfriend flirin', you try to instill it in your head that they're just having a friendly conversation when deep down you know it's the total opposite.

Why do we let our hearts, emotions and feelings interfere with truth and our decisions? You break it off with that wannabe playa or that good for nothin' fool, but soon as he/she start kissin' and you start to get in the heat of the moment you fall right back and forgive and forget!

Why is it that despite everything that jerk put you through, sex always makes it right? Maybe my questions will go unanswered but I thought I should just put it out there.

-007, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sounds like you have a lot of pent up frustration about a situation you found yourself tied up in. Our response would be to remember that if you honestly respect yourself, you will attract people who also respect you. There are plenty of people out there who can engage in a healthy relationship, it's just hard to see when you care so much about someone who doesn't treat you the way you want to be treated.

Them Funerals

Funerals are the worst gatherings to attend. It's always very hard for me to go to funerals.

The most recent time that I've been to a rosary or a funeral was just a few months ago. It was for my homeboy that got shot at age of sixteen. He got killed on March 12, 2006. That funeral was very hard on me. I got drunk for three-weeks straight. My house wasn't even ten-blocks away from where he got shot. I was so depressed from all of it that I had to leave Hayward, so I could stop crying.

Even ‘till this day, I’m very emotional about it. I barely can talk about it without shedding a few tears. I will always remember the way my homeboy would make everybody laugh and how he would always have a smile on his face. I will always think of him when I’m smoking Newports and drinking Hennessy.

-Lady Sweet, 150 Crew

From The Boat: We wish no one ever had to lose a friend at such a young age. We hope that his memory and the knowledge that he should still be around making people laugh will help you to choose a different path for yourself. Maybe smoking and drinking aren't the best way to honor him, but doing something positive for your self might be. Save someone else from the heartache you feel right now. Rise up, leave the gangsta lifestyle and move on to something positive and more hopeful!

Now I got the “Wizard of Oz” on my
mind, (There is no place like home),
because there is no place like home.

Going Home

I can't wait to go home. When I go home am going to do very well. I'm going to go to school, do less drugs and drinking and stay out of trouble because this ain't the place to be.

Some of the girls been here 10 times, and some in here for years. I ain't with that shhh. I ain't coming back, I miss my little niece too much for this shhh.

I hear this saying, new word, and I'm missing out, and I am hurt by that. I miss my mom's cooking and my sister making jokes about my brother.

In here it is hard, it is very hard. Today I ate mac and cheese and bread, now what is that!? At home I ate fried chicken and cheese potato salad in hot sauce.

The bed is hard, dust everywhere, have to ask to get up, have to wear the same panties as thousands of girls put on etc.

All I am thinking is I should have listened to my mom because I just found out that she is always right. Now I got the “Wizard of Oz” on my mind, (There is no place like home), because there is no place like home. People don’t believe me when I say I ain’t coming back but I’m not.

-Carla, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope you don't come back, and think that if you carry the knowledge you have now with you back home, you might stay out. The reason people might not believe you is that so most people say they won't come back, but once their on the streets the old ways take over. Good luck, we're behind you.

all the years that I've been around
I've been to a lot of funerals

Poisoned By Voices

Life in a cell
 More like in hell
 Ninja at the outside livin' wealthy
 And livin' well
 Starin' at these walls, hopin' to get some mail,
 Mom stressin' cause her son keep comin' to jail,
 only reason I'm back in jail cause these ninjas run and tell
 We call 'em snitches
 Can't keep your mouth closed, stickin' yo' nose in other ninjas' business
 Committed other crimes
 Now I'm sentenced
 I'm on my own independent
 I ain't here to make friends, I'm here to do my time and end it.
 End this place I'm attendin' face with another case,
 I feel stranded somehow
 I manage to see the same faces in the courtroom and I can't stand it,
 Standin' in front of judge but he ain't surprised to see another Hispanic
 panic throughout the courtroom like I'm a bandit.
 For me that's a tragedy
 Judge look at my violent record all he sees is assault and battery
 With bodily injury
 What about your family
 They're all mad at me
 'Cause I'm makin' the wrong choices,
 Poisoned by the street
 They keep calling me, I hear their voices.

-Rio, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's the thing about the voice of temptation, if it weren't pretty seductive and powerful, it wouldn't be temptation... But man, read this poem, listen to your own voice, and it's own power and eloquence. There's nothing the street can whisper to you that a writer/thinker of true talent can't shout down. And you are a true talent.

Too Many Funerals

What's up Beat? How's life been treating you? This that homeboy from Hayward coming at you with my utmost respect. I'm going to be talking to you about funerals today. Man, I've been to seven funerals from my family and friends dying. Five of the funerals I've been to were from family dying of old age or health problems, but the two other ones were my close homeboy and cousin. Man, I hate going to funerals and seeing their body in the casket getting buried six feet deep and knowing that's going to be me one day and other people watching me buried six feet deep.

I hate thinking about death, but I know everyone dies one day, but after I go to my other facility, I'm going to go to my program and get out of jail and be successful in life before I get locked up in prison because I'm about to be eighteen years old and I'm trying to get my record sealed and do good when I get to the outside.

-Lonny, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Even though your family members were of old age and had health issues, it is still tough watching them go, isn't? What kind of an impact did your homeboy and cousin's death have on you since they were closer to your age range? We like the way you ended your piece because it sounds to us like you have received your wake-up call. What do you plan on doing once you're back on the outs to prevent yourself from coming back to places like this? Remember: Once you're 18, you'll be doing time with men and not boys your age, so it's a good idea to start doing right now!

My Life on The Streets of Oakland Part 2

...After the police hit my grandfather's house, they took my grandfather and my sister's boyfriend and stuff. Two weeks later they let my granddaddy out on parole, and two weeks later, after we got out on a sunny day I had woke up and got dressed and went to go and mess with my two cousins.

So after me and my cousins was doing what we was doin'. It was like twelve-noon when me and my cousin was going back to my granddaddy's house, when we had walked and there was the police there. I didn't know what was going on, so I had went to my room and got dressed.

After I got dressed me and my cousin was leaving out the door but the police officer told me I could not go. So I asked him what for, and he didn't say. Then ten minutes later, they said me and my sister could not stay at my grandfather's house because it was unsafe there - and the two ladies had escorted me and my sister to this green car.

(to be continued)

-Lil' Man Man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This story is harrowing and sad, but we find ourselves looking forward to the new chapter, because you're so good and putting us right there in the scene. Keep going - you have an important tale to tell!

Messing With My Head

Hey What's up Beat, this is Diego coming from max. I got something to tell ya. Like three days ago I got a phone call from my PO she said that ROP denied me. She said the best thing going for me right now is CYA.

I was like, "the best thing? What's best about that?"

But anyway, now I got to go there for like 5 or 6 years. Man, I been stressing like crazy in here just knowing that I'm going to be locked up for hella long. But ef it. I'm not gon' sit here and cry about it now, like people said. Do the crime, you got to do the time.

The only thing that's messing with my head right now is my daughter because I'm not going to be with her for a while, other than that I'm cool. But what can I do about it? Nothing.

I go back to court in two days for my sentencing, after that I'll write you again to let you know how long I'm going to be locked up for, but in the meantime, I'm gonna stay strong and keep on keeping my head up. I'm not gon' let all this get to me. Well, I'm gone.

-Diego, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The good thing about all this is that you do seem to be trying to get your head on straight. You (and your daughter) will still be really young when you get out, and you'll have a whole future ahead of you. The question is then how can you make the best use of your time... the only good thing about lockdown is that you have a lot of free time - don't waste it!

Pain

Everywhere there's pain
 I feel so ashamed that my brother got killed
 by a man that never had guilt.
 My daddy got cancer don't ask
 'cause I don't have the answer.

Why would he do this to himself
 'cause everybody know that drugs is bad for your health.

When my brother died was it my turn to fly.
 So look in the mirror at the lil' girl that cries and ask
 God why

I wanna say bye,
 take me away 'cause I don't want to see my mamma
 cry and say to myself, I'm scared I don't know what
 I'm scared of

so I look at the stars up above so I cry,
 cry and pray myself to sleep
 to watch over me and ask to take me 'cause I never
 wanna be
 like a family member or a patna and be deceased.

-Reece, 150 Crew

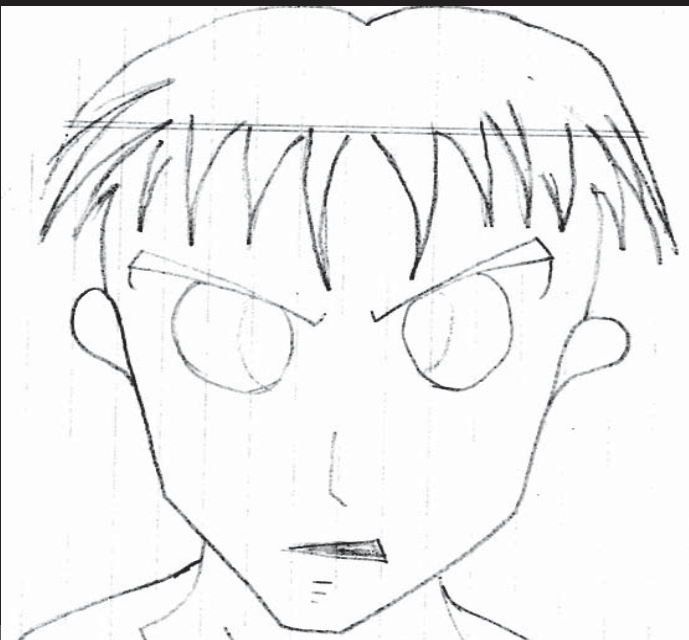
From The Beat: What do you do with all of the pain? We're glad you write, and we hope that you try to live a different kind of life when you have the chance. Keep writing, we appreciate hearing from you.

Life Sucks

Life sucks and then you die
Life sucks because I am in jail
Life sucks because juvenile don't get no bail
Life sucks because you get put in a situation when
you can't tell.

-Big Joe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Life does, sometimes, suck. No way around it. Sometimes, you wake up in the morning, and all the messed up problems, past and future, can make you feel exactly the way you did in this poem, especially, as you wrote here, when you're trapped and can't tell what's coming up next. But we know that you have your hopeful sides too, and each facet of how you feel about life is a facet of who you are.. and they say that it our sorrows, not our joys, that are our greatest teachers. Do you think that's true?



What a Life

Most of my life has been spent in jail. I never thought I'd see the day I would be facin' nine years. At first they were trying to charge me as an adult and give me 25 years, but they tried me as a Juvenile and can only give me nine.

Being in jail makes me wonder about all the choices I could have made, like smokin' weed or getting that gun and shooting that man. Like my life will never be the same anymore. This is going to be a hard pill to swallow because I never had the finest things in life, but that still don't mean I should have did those things.

My dad should come and said Joe let's go and hang out , but he didn't and even though mom was always there for me, but a woman can't raise a man . So I turned to something else - the streets. And that's no place for someone who wants to make it.

So when I look back on all this, I just... man what a life.

-Big Joe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There comes a time in every person's life when they have to take a step back and say "Is this how I want things to be?" Sometimes they happen at the worst times too, when our hearts are weary and we feel trapped and broken... but those are also the best times in our lives in the long run, because that's the wake up call, when we make new choices: So right now you're at a crossroads. You see your life clearly - you see what's wrong with it and what needs to change. This could be a turning point for you! A turning point towards something better, and of course a turning point towards a life that doesn't suck.

Being in jail makes me wonder about
all the choices I could have made, like
smokin' weed or getting that gun and
shooting that man

RIP Baby Darrine

He was only nine months old
Why'd he have to go?

He was only nine months old
He took his first two steps to me.

He was only nine months old
He brought me a lot of joy and happiness.
He was only nine months old.

I was on my way home from school with some popsicles that come in a pack, and there are some that I don't like and I give them away. My mom opened the door in tears, and I was like, what's wrong and she said the baby died. I thought she was talking about one of the kids from the school she teaches at, but she said Darrine, my whole body dropped for a moment. My heart had skipped a beat, I could not believe it, could not understand it, when he died, it took a part of my life.

-Big Joe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There used to be an old African myth that every star in the sky was the spirit of a baby that had died too young. That the sky chose the best babies because it needed them to save the sky for darkness. That's what we thought of when we read this heartbreaking story of your loss - we thought of those two steps the baby took to you, and how much love there was on both sides of those steps, and wondered if maybe those steps were stars too, small lights of to hold onto that might help stave off the darkness. Peace and RIP Darrine.

My heart had skipped a beat, I could not believe
it, could not understand it, when he died, it took
a part of my life.

What Helps

What helps with life

What helps is to help others....

What helps is to honor...

What helps is to respect others..

What helps is to think...

What helps is to have self control...

What helps is to be free...

What helps is to be careful

What helps is to be focused...

What helps is to understand...

What helps is to be smart...

What helps is to learn...

What helps is to set good examples

Those are some things that can help with life.

-Big Joe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nothing to say about this blueprint for good living, except that we printed it up and scotch taped it to our wall, because the advice in it is so good!

Up At Camp

I'm still at Camp Sweeney, still posting. I've been up here for about eight months now. I mean if you commit the crime, you will do the time. I'll face this noise for a cool minute. But now that I've been here, I'm starting to see the real colors of some of the staff. This one staff up here, acts hella coo' with you, but the next minute, he is writing you up and snitching on you to your parents when they visit you.

Then there's another one that makes people sit at another table because they want to catch us or write us up for any stupid little reason. I can't believe this stuff; I need to get up out of here. This place ain't cool, man. It's like these mind-tripping, hating system don't want us to go home but want to write me up for anything he can.

But on the other hand, it's really my fault, because I was the dumb enough to commit the crime, and now I'm here and all messed up, man! But I still need to overcome this and graduate this program and get up out of here. I guess staff has favorites and just loves doing favoritism, but we can't do nothing 'bout it 'cause when we write grievances, the supervisors don't do nothing about it. Late.

-Brainiak, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know what? Camp is no different from the rest of the world or the rest of life. People are people, whether their staff, friends, your boss, fellow employee or family, people have faults and play favorites. It's human nature. So one of the things you need to learn here, is how to tolerate it and not to get consumed by it. You'll have the same issues come your way in the work world, too — or out in the street where the consequences can be far more severe than someone telling your parents. You feel? Rise above it all, and when you're free, make the right choices so you don't fall back into the system ('cause it doesn't get better than this, just worse).

Highland Elementary

I remember when I used to go to Highland Elementary School, when I was six years old. I used to have some cool teachers, but sometimes they didn't like what I did at recess, or in class in some cases. I remember when my kindergarten teacher (he was big) used to try to help us out. When I started school, I was pretty much dumb. But I learned a lot within those years.

My teacher always had us in class, either with him reading a book or with the radio cassette player reading it for him. When I started first grade, I still didn't know how to read, but I knew how to write. In the middle of the first grade, I started reading, and I tried to practice every so often. But unfortunately, I didn't read as well as my other classmates. In second grade, I was already using every computer program that taught me how to read, and I was already reading up to the level with the other kids.

So in third grade I was damn near reading like a professional! When I was in the fourth grade, I had any type of book that I could read so I could improve more. And in fifth grade, I had a cool teacher who taught me how to play chess and how to relax my mind. Well, I just want to thank all my teachers from Highland Elementary School.

-Brainiak, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know, of course, that reading facility is no test of intelligence. You can be very smart and a poor reader, or not so smart but race through the text reading out loud. As you get into the higher grades, comprehension of the underlying meaning of the books you read becomes more important than making out each word on the page. Those with reading disabilities, by the higher elementary grades, begin to compensate for the greater difficulty they experience (on a physiological level) making out each word, with a greater comprehension of the meaning of a passage as a whole. We're not saying you have a reading disability, just that intelligence and comprehension count more than facility as a reader.

The Streets Of Oakland

the life i have lived
you know i've had to strive
and also loved to drive
people stand on the corners
selling pot to the smokers
as i drive by them all
i see them go from having it all
to not have a penny in they pockets
what really doesn't make sense
really it isn't the empty pocket
but the way they don't have any more sense
but all of it has been burnt out
like a car that's in flames
right down the streets and the fire wont go out
why people do it, you know, to have fame
a reputation is what they want
and getting it may result in death
but hopefully they will have time to realize
that within time all riches will be gone
but remember that is not the way
the real thing to do is be careful
and remember the best thing to do is pray
and never ever give up be very helpful
late

-Brainiak, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's not that doing right will keep your pockets filled with money at all times, 'cause doing right you know there will be hard times, too. But when you get through the hard times, you're still free — you didn't trade your freedom for that feeling that you can't stand to have empty pockets for a day, 'cause in the end you always pay the system for choosing crime to get paid 'cause you didn't want to listen. Now you put it out for all to hear, and if you follow your own advice, you'll never come back here or anywhere else in the so-called correctional system. Correct yourself or everything you have will soon go missing.

Rest In Peace, Dreamer

I remember my patna, Dreamer. I remember the first day I met her. We were at Elmhurst Middle School. She used to kick it with a girl I knew, named Maria. I was in the school's gym in physical education, just playing around, that day I first met her. Those were some clean ass days back at Elmhurst.

One day I was messing around with Dreamer and Maria at the gym, and she was playing around too. So I was just messing with her and just being the person I am, I said, "ef you!" to her. So she said to me, "I don't ef trash, ninja!"

So then when school got out, we used to walk like fifteen to twenty deep to her house, 'cause we were cool like that.

So like about a week later, after school, we used to go to my patna's house. We used to get on one at his house and just have a good time without going dumb-ass-on-one, like messing stuff up or messing with people. We used to just post in my patna's room and watch police videos or slap some music on my patna's computer.

So one day my ninja, Dreamer, committed suicide. And I was in Camp when it happened. But I was feeling the urge to get up out of here, but I just got a TR (temporary release), so I hope wherever she is, she is safe. Rest In Peace, Dreamer.

-Brainiak, 150 Crew

From The Beat: They say that suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem, meaning, of course, that it is no solution at all, 'cause the problem would have eventually gone away or been solved but once you're gone, you're gone forever. So, yeah, we hope Dreamer's spirit is at peace, but we hate hearing about young people committing suicide because they still had most of their lives left to live, and after they survived whatever terrible thing made them think they didn't want to go on, their lives might have offered them blessings they never imagined possible. Man, that's sad that she took her own life! But you're running from Camp wouldn't bring her back, but it would have messed your life up even more than it is already messed up. You feel? She lost control and made a bad mistake, so it won't help for you to make another mistake on top of it. RIP Dreamer

Kitty Cat

I know this one girl, let's just call her Kitten. Anyway, she was gorgeous. She had short, red brown hair and a cute face, with dimples on both cheeks (awww.) She lights up the room whenever she walks in. She listens to Tupac, Ziggy Marley, Sublime, Pink Floyd. She smokes Newports and can hold her liquor (we call it the magic elixir) like a man. We once saw "Legally Blonde 2" and every time the main character wore pink or something stupid, we would take a shot of Seagram's gin. Halfway through the movie, we were shhhfaced. She drives a green truck and is just a fun person to hang around. She was pretty pissed when she found out what I did—the girl was her friend. I hope we can still be friends when I get out. I miss her a lot. Love you always, Kitten.

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: The drinking theme comes up quite a bit in your writing. Now that you have been locked up for a year minus the alcohol, do you have the will to stay sober? We hope this is something you can correct upon touching down. AS for Kitten she sounds like she was a wonderful friend, and we're sure you understand if she chooses to stay away from you when you get released. Maybe, when you get out, you can find her and explain your story and keep Kitten as a friend. Or better yet, leave the past associates and those tied to your old ways and start fresh!

Whatever

Strewn about the room are a variety of things
Bathrobe, calendar, and books
I lie in my bed, surrounded by papers
Pen in hand, writing about whatever
My thoughts constantly turn to girls
Or this one in particular
Of those two hot twins
Or whatever I think 'bout
I don't get how my time is almost over
I really can't believe it
It's twelve o'clock at night and I'm tired
I'm determined to break 40 poems before rest
I think the next poem should rhyme
Well, this poem is definitely not POW material
Maybe number 39 will be
Let's find out

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: Some of our Beat Within editors love best your "Miscellaneous Poems," when you list any nuts thing that comes into your mind, whether they have any seemingly logical relationship or not. Somehow the "gestalt," an overview of images that you put together, results in a story with a rational of its own, sort of like Bob Dylan. Anyhow, those poems are so funny and somehow they work, so why don't you keep creating them?

Choices

Black hair and I'm falling in love
Blonde hair anew, a loves fades away from one
Black hair broke my heart
Blonde has yet to discourage, has a clean slate
Black was a stalker, following my footsteps
Blonde wants a friendship and nothing more
Black is the devil
Blonde is my angel
Black needs to get her life in check
Blonde knows where she is going
Black bi-polar
Blonde excitingly spontaneous
Blonde or black
Choices

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: Whatever happened to brown-haired or red-haired ladies? Interesting piece. You're about to get out of juvy and there are tons of ladies out there. Whatever happened to starting over? You'll really be amazed by all your choices!

No Longer Scorpion

Interestingly enough, I am a man
When worse comes to worse, I fend for myself
Always the entertainer, I show off in front of women
Not to mention the fact that I'm overweight
There is often no train of thought whatsoever
Totally hoping to get a Piece Of The Week
Obliterating my chances by writing random pieces
Say "Goodbye" to any structured literature
Love poems are the only exception, though
Unless you count this as a love poem
Really, I've only had affectionate feelings lately
Particularly ones about intimate feeling
Shame is what I feel, for I am embarrassed
Only carnal thoughts give me poetry material
Maybe I should not submit this
Even though I know I will (ha ha)
Writing this is a pointless waste of ink
Everybody reading this, "I am sorry."
There is something I want to tell my readers
"People of The Beat, the persona Scorpion, is dead"
Until yesterday, I liked being Scorpion
So I was perturbed when five beings asked me
"Scorpion? Who's Scorpion?"
Until yesterday, I liked being Scorpion
You can imagine my surprise, right?
Calmly I explained that I was Scorpion and left
Like I said before, I was surprised
I've decided to just be "Dominic"
That way people can make the connection
Long-winded as it may seem
I am done with this poem, or whatever it is
Consider me complete
Killing Scorpion off made me sad
So, goodnight

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: We don't understand exactly what you mean when you write that five people didn't know who "Scorpion" is? Who are these people—youths in juvy with you? What does it matter? Many of your Beat Within readers know well who you are, love your poems and stories, and look forward to reading them. Maybe these five are new in juvy and/or aren't that into The Beat, and/or are jealous of your versatility, talent, and amazing success as a writer. Whatever, why let them influence you in any way? You love being Scorpion and it has been your persona ever since we met you. Don't let these people rain on your parade! Then again Dominic has a nice ring to it!

Us

-Dominic

From The Beat: Lovely, sensuous poem, Dominic. You take a sweet, tender moment and write about it so lightly, touchingly, that it's much more evocative than anything heavy breathing and pornographic, yet a bit too much for our young readers in The Beat Within. You always seem to write with just the perfect delicacy your subject yearns for.

You Rock

If I approached and gently kissed your cheek
Would you turn away and promptly speak?
If so, what exactly would you say?
Would you want me to leave or would you let me stay?
I'm anxious to find out how you feel inside your heart
I'm an artist—I'll draw your emotions out—let me start
I want to be in your company, want to feel your heat
Lay your head on my chest; hear my heart beat?
It beats for the love that you give in one glance
Just let me show ya—give me a chance
I don't have much, but I'll give you all I've got
For lack of a better word—baby, you rock!

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: Giving someone a kiss on the cheek seems harmless, (except in juvy, where it's forbidden.) We suggest to hold back on the kiss until you really know the person and the feelings are mutual. Start as friends!

Flatter

-Dominic

From The Beat: Dominic, in this poem you pretty much "flatter," like in righteous praise, yourself, not the lady you're writing this to/about, which is okay, if that's what you meant to do. Never the less, this is a piece that is solely directed to one person and if that's the case we suggest you figure out another angle to get your touching message out.

Life

My eyelids grow heavy with tears
 Vision blurred, but I don't need to see
 Jaw relaxes and throat swells
 My heart in my neck, pulsing wildly
 I float above my body
 Crouched against this wall of bricks
 Head rolls side to side on the beat of my breathing
 Sad melodies run through my brain like an echo
 The words become who I am, my life
 One would expect me to shed many tears
 But an unknown force keeps them from spilling
 Reminiscing on my lost childhood
 And even missing the hours as they pass
 Never again will I repeat my first word
 Losing my virginity to an angel is something gone forever
 Only shattered memories, pieces of the past
 Keep myself occupied
 In a world of loss
 I rise above and continue
 Passing my life second
 By second
 By
 Second

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: Lovely, sad poem, Dominic. One thing about being locked up against your consent is, you can utterly surrender to the moment. Even if outside events/voices try to beckon to you, urge you to come out and respond to them, you can't, so you can totally become immersed in yourself, your situation, your imagination. You can learn a lot from what's up there in your mind, when there's nothing to distract you and/or alleviate the pain/the pleasure of the present. What have you learned from these "trips" into yourself?

Thinking

-Dominic

From The Beat: You really aren't supposed to write to or about anyone else in juvy, even when it's not clear whom you're writing about, especially in a small juvenile hall. It can embarrass other people, and even if you mean well and you intend your poem or story to be an appreciation of that person, it can compromise his or her privacy. So if these poems you've clearly written about ladies in juvy with you don't make it into The Beat, you'll know why. Sorry.

First Crush In A While

-Dominic

From The Beat: You write a piece in hopes of this special person to see, yet we find it to be a bit inappropriate and awkward to allow into our pages. But to respond to your work, women often indicate to men what they want them to do or not do, so maybe you're wise to wait for her to let you know how she wants you to proceed with her. Also, once they get to know you, women often change how they feel about you. So, your approach to her—just wait and see—may be the most appropriate.

Imaginary Phone Call

Hello, I'm inquiring about the looks you've been giving me.
 Are they, "Hello, what are you staring at" looks?
 Or are they the "Hey, you look cute" looks?
 I hope it's the second, because, well, you are really attractive,
 and I...um, no, I don't have a girlfriend, but...yes, I am interested in you.
 But why?... Oh, you do think I'm cute?
 Yes...yes...um huh... Oh, so those looks were...the second one?
 Okay, so...um... You want to what?
 Don't you think we would be better off waiting?... No?
 Well, if you want.... Just got out of the shower?... Thinking of me?
 Um... Huh? Wow! That's flattering!
 Well, I want to do that to... Wait... Hold on...
 There is someone listening to us... Oh, so where... (click.)

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: What inspired this piece? . Who do you think was listening to this lady and you talking on the phone? Tel; The Beat! You left us hanging. Why were they listening? Why do you think that possibility scared this lady enough to hang up on you? You write with a beautiful sense of intrigue—your audience always wants to read more. Create a part 2!

You Know Who You Are

I, as a man, will care for you endlessly
 Connections through emotions, unbreakable
 You, as a woman, are sophisticated love
 Beauty at the peak of your smile, is happiness
 Now and again I'll find myself blushing
 When your gaze skips across mine
 A true friend you are, and I will be, too
 I refuse to make the same mistake twice
 At the sound of your laugh, I mentally relax
 Trusting you throughout our incarceration
 I am your friend and you are mine

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: Even though being in juvy has got to be enormously lonely and it's natural to get crushes on whoever is around you, maybe it would be better to just enjoy the friendships you have with the wonderful youths in juvy with you and leave it at that for the moment. But young love doesn't listen to anyone, right? What "mistake" are you referring to, that you vow you won't repeat? Can you just chill and have as much fun as you can up in there? You all will be free soon and can pursue any friendships or more then.

You

You are my fine China, my special possession
 A gift from God, baby girl, you're my blessing
 Your voice is like an angel, playing a harp
 I lay awake at night, thinking of you smiling in the dark
 When nights are cold, baby, you make me hot
 If I'm able to do it, I'll give you everything I've got
 Your smile is brighter than all the stars in the sky
 I see beauty shining from the depths of your eyes
 With you I'm complete; my heart is whole
 I'm filled with joy down to the depths of my soul
 I love you and I'll stick by our side, girl
 You are my fantasy and I'll give you the world

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: You're always so eager to commit yourself for eternity and to offer up all you've got to your next true love, Dominic, which is really tender, innocent and touching. But whatever happened to slowly getting to know a lady, letting her reveal herself to you and you to her? What's your hurry? You see beauty in so many ladies, and you're right to see the uniqueness and specialness of each girl. But that doesn't mean you have to commit yourself to her happiness. Can't you just enjoy her and see what evolves between you? Let your relationship breathe?

Pink Spaghetti

This'll be my thirty-sixth poem written in the last three days
 I hope I get a Piece Of The Week, I think I just may
 I've written so many words, my hand is beyond pain
 It doesn't even feel like anything, just numb skin and veins
 I write partly 'cause of boredom and mostly for you
 I hope you'll read all the rest of them—that's what I would do
 I hope they print all of them in one week's magazine
 In my mind, though, if they don't, I got a whole bag of things
 By the time The Beat arrives Wednesday, staying at this rate
 I should have about seventy, seventy-nine if I stay up late
 I named this poem "Pink Spaghetti," but I really don't know why
 I hope somebody else'll figure it out, 'cause I'm done trying
 I realized that every letter in the beginning of this poem, but three start with "I"
 I don't know how that happened, but I know why
 I wonder what thith then they would sound like with a litps
 Goldfish have a memory span of, um, two seconds
 Even though this doesn't rhyme, alligators can't stick out their tongues

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: Number 36, hmmm, you're truly on a role, and we as always are honored to open our pages to such a talented writer.

Who I Trust the Most

The person I trust the most, is my grandma, because she took me out of the hospital when I was a little boy. I was sick, and I could not breathe right, and I could not eat my food right. That is why my grandma is the first in line. That is the person that I love the most. And if it wasn't for her, I would be dead.

So I am grateful for what I got in life. That is why I don't get into a lot of trouble on the outs. So when I get out, I will do better, and I will change my ways. I don't want my grandma's blood pressure to go up, 'cause she could die. So that is why I am not caring about what people say to me. No, I just let it go, so I won't get in trouble.

It is going to be okay in here, 'cause I can wait. I will go home on the seventeenth of this month, and that is all I am waiting for. Then, that will be it! I will get to see my brother and sister! And my grandma! And the persons that I love!

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your grandma sounds like a very loving person who has your best interest at heart. So if keeping your grandma's blood pressure in mind, helps you to do the right thing, that's great! 'Cause you do owe her your life. But to really stay out of trouble, you have to want it for yourself, too. Take her love and concern and plant it so deep in your heart, that you do the right thing for you — then share the love and blessings with her, and the rest of your family, too — but do it for you, 'cause you want to.

Shadow of Reflection

Somethin so blue... No black...

Dance you... I look at... my shadow for reflection
No mirror, haven't seen my face for years. I must look depressin'

Truth is ... I know, no more of my image...
Outside...

It seems that only I
Live and see inside
Besides... Who I am
reflections hide

My shadow understands my glory

I guess the future only worries
'Cause the past only hurry's
It's way back

Everyone has a shadow
so everyone's black in the
shadow of reflection I look at

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice Piece. The repeating images of shadow and reflection are really strong.

I Trust

I trust what I remember
believe what I forget
only until spring or winter

My soul will forgive it
maybe until November
only then...then and now

Picture to freeze thoughts
and letting rain out the clouds

early become late
Trust what I forget

believe what I remember
in fate
so I could only believe it.

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece wants to say something, but it's a little bit vague. Try to stick to those concrete images and think about what you are trying to get across. The rain and clouds are really nice pictures.

My Happiest Memory

My happiest memory is when my grandpa was here, and I changed because that is the only person who would tell me to do good and to stop all of the things I was doing wrong — but I did not listen to him.

I would be stealing things that didn't belong to me, and then I stopped, because I got caught. Of course, I had got caught before, but that's when I stopped, so that was the happiest time that I spent with him. I love my grandpa! He was my grandpa and my daddy and my God!

So that's another reason that that I am in here though. What goes around comes around, and I did not listen. Now I got to pay for it, and that is bad. I got to do six months in Camp, and some people that I don't like are in here, too. So that is what I regret. I should have listened to him. Then I would not have a felony on my chest.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you change for the better and then slip back to your old ways. What will make it different this time? Once you start doing wrong, do you feel like it's too late to change? Or do you just get greedy for the things you can't buy and you lose all your resolve to do good. How can you make some money the right way, so you can pay for what you want? Do you think that would help you not change and then slip back again? Or is it 'cause you hang out with the wrong friends or family members, who influence you to do what you know you shouldn't?

Before We Get Together

I really don't want to throw it all away
really before I say...

I want you and I to be together external the
countin' days

and plenty of good night sleeps
before I hold myself alone and weep
look into my eyes there is the truth
and my tears is proof

I'm not leavin' you with them
I gotta be a gentlemen

I'll sleep everyday from here so I could get tall
enough to reach a cloud

I just want understanding,

no confusion I gotta see you smile
hold my hand lets walk until we get lost in
amusement

I'll love until love
promise without promise
lust until lust above

there I'll be forever honest

this is how I want us to start our love
before we get together

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a really nice poem, good work.

Advice I'd Give to My Kids About Staying Out of Trouble

The kind of advice I would give my kids, is to stay out of trouble — do not take things away from people that are out on the streets, and do not take things from out of the store. Do not get in no gang, because it is a lot of trouble: people be getting shot and stabbed and robbed.

If anybody mess wit' you, come and tell me, so I can take care of it, and things will be okay. I will tell them not to smoke or drink, because you will kill you brain and you will kill your liver, but it is all up to you to make that choice. And they need to go to school and get they' GED, so they can go to college and get into a lot of sports and make a lot of money, and so they can live in a house for themself and they' little family. Then they can move on with their life.

But anything that my kids want I will give it to them — what I got they got.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Getting a GED is cool, but why not help them get that high school diploma? Why have them settle for second best, if you can help them pass life's tests? But yeah, it sounds like you'll help them see that they don't have to be caught up in crime or ever have to serve time. And why should they steal, if they have a father who helps them. You feel?

In

In my hands I struggle
from my eyes tears fumble
in my heart deepness
in my mind is nightmares
on my lips is passion of promises
in my life is difficulty
in my soul is eternitiy

-Lil' Mainy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We like that you used the body as your outline—that you carried the theme throughout and then ended with those parts of self that are so intertwined with our bodies—our lives and souls—but aren't tangible.

Mi Jefita

¡G-onda homies! Este es Duende, esperando para el día de mi corte. Espero que el juez no me de a un group homes, pero si me manda ya no modo. Lo que me aguita es que mi jefita esta sufriendo por mi culpa. También extraño a mi jainita. Ella sabe que la amo y que es todo en mi vida.

A todos que estan laquiados, no se aguiten y mantengan sus cabezas arriba.

From The Beat: *Esperamos que si te llegan a dar una oportunidad que la tomes y no la desaproveches. Por lo menos podemos ver que por lo menos has pensado en el dolor que le has causado a tu madre. Esperamos sigas pensando en ella y eso te ayude a ver que es lo mejor que debes de hacer por ella.*

My Mother

What's up homies! This is Duende, waiting for my day in court. I hope that the judge doesn't send me to a Group Home, but if the judge does, whatever. What makes me feel sad is knowing that my mother is suffering because of me. I also miss my girlfriend. She knows that I love her and that she is everything in my life.

To all that are locked up, don't get down and keep your heads up high.

-Duende, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: *We hope if they end up giving you an opportunity, you take it and you don't let it go to waste. At least we can see that you have at least thought about the pain that you have caused your mother. We hope that you continue thinking about her and we hope that helps you see what is the best thing you can do for her.*

Aquí Estoy

Pues aquí estoy escribiendo de nuevo. Pues cuando estoy aquí adentro siento mucho calor, pero aveces siento frío. Cuando salgo me siento como nuevo. Estoy esperando ir a corte para ver que me dicen. Despues de la corte voy a regresar al Rancho. Alla casi siempre es caliente, principalmente ahorita. Pues aquí cada ratito cambia de clima.

Lo que cambiamos somos nosotros. Bueno, ya no quiero escribir mas. Tengo mucha peresa. Al rato.

From The Beat: *Parece que te estas acostumbrando al clima de estos lugares y eso esta mal. Esperamos que hagas las cosas bien para que pronto puedas regresar a tu casa y estar en los climas que más te gustan.*

Here I Am

Well, here I am, writing once again. Well, when I am inside of here, I feel very hot, but sometimes I feel cold. When I get out, I feel new. I'm waiting to go to court to see what they have to say to me. After court, I'm going to go back to the Ranch. Over there, it's almost always hot, especially right now. Well, here, the climate is always changing.

What changes is us. Well, I don't want to write anymore. I feel very lazy. I'll holla at y'all later.

-Jonathan, B5

From The Beat: *It appears to us that you are accustomed to the climate of these places and that's bad. We hope that you do things right so you can go back to your house soon and be in the climates that you like the most.*

Pienso En Mi Futuro

Yo me encuentro pensando en mi futuro. La verdad es que pienso en cosas bonitas que me han pasado.

From The Beat: *¿Que has pensado sobre tu futuro?*

I Think About My Future

I find myself thinking about my future. The truth is that I think about nice things that have happened to me.

-Arturo, B2

From The Beat: *What have you thought about regarding your future?*

What keeps me upright is that my life is the most important thing in that moment. I need to try to motivate myself, thinking about all the good things that I can do with my life.

Mi Motivación

Me lebanto pensando en mi futuro, pensando en todas las cosas que tiene mi vida, y pensando en que puedo hacer cosas para mejorar este mundo en que vivo.

Lo que me mantiene de pie es que mi vida es lo más importante en ese momento. Necesito tratar de motivarme, pensando en todas las cosas buenas que puedo hacer con mi vida. Yo pienso en los momentos más felices de mi vida que he tenido.

From The Beat: *Que bien que tengas motivaciones que te puedan ayudar en tu vida. No dejes que nadie te quite estas ideas de tu mente. ¿Como crees que puedas ayudar este mundo? ¿Tienes algunos pensamientos en como hacerlo? ¿Que pasara una vez que salga, realizaras tus motivaciones?*

My Motivation

I wake up thinking about my future, thinking about all the things that my life has, and thinking about what kinds of things I can do to better this world in which I live.

What keeps me upright is that my life is the most important thing in that moment. I need to try to motivate myself, thinking about all the good things that I can do with my life. I think about the happiest moment that I have had in my life.

-Nestor B2

From The Beat: *That's good that you have things that motivate you which can help you out in your life. Don't allow anyone to take these ideas out of your mind. How do you believe you can help out this world? Do you have any thoughts on how to do it? What's going to happen once you get out: Will you realize that things that motivate you?*

Llamaría A Mi Mamá

Si tubiera el numero de cualquier persona yo llamaría a mi mama porque tu mamá es lo más importante en esta vida. Si pudiera también le llamaria a mis amigos o a mi novia.

From The Beat: *¿Que le dijeras? ¿Si ella es lo más importante, porque la estas haciendo sufrir de la manera que lo estas haciendo? ¿Que crees que a tu madre le gustaria escuchar de ti?*

I Would Call My Mother

If I had any person's phone number, I would call my mother because your mother is the most important thing in this life. If I could, I would also call my friends or my girlfriend.

-Oscar, B2

From The Beat: *What would you tell her? If she is the most important thing in your life, then why are you making her suffer this way? What do you believe your mother would like to hear from you?*

Llamaría A Mi Hermano

Si tubiera el numero de telefono de mi hermano, lo llamaría. El nombre de mi hermano es Javier. Le preguntaría como esta y le dijera que me venga a recoger y llevarme a donde está mi hermano que esta en Sur Carolina. Me gustaria ir con el para ir a trabajar y así poder ayudar a mi madre.

From The Beat: *A lo mejor seria mejor que te fueras con tu otro hermano si es que no puedes con las tentaciones de estas calles o amistades. A lo mejor esto cambiaria tu vida. Piensalo bien!*

I Would Call My Brother

If I had my brother's telephone number, I would call him. My brother's name is Javier. I would ask him how he is doing and I would tell him to come and pick me up and to take me where he is, which is South Carolina. I would like to go with him so I can go work and by doing so, be able to help out my mother.

-Jose B1

From The Beat: *Maybe it would be best if you went with your other brother, that's if you can't deal with the temptations of the streets or friends. Maybe this would change your life. Think about this very well!*

The Loved Ones

It's so messed up to see a loved one go. It's been so messed up to see a young person like my ninja Paco RIP for real. That's my ninja to the end. RIP to my dad and that's real. It's been so many people who died in Oakland and the Bay Area. RIP to my sister Jamie I love you sis.

-Brother

From The Beat: Your poor aching heart! You've lost so many loved ones, it's not fair. We wish we could do something to take away your heart ache. At the least, we thank you for sharing your story with The Beat.

At Camp At Last

What's up Beat! This Tui Tui straight, from Oakland, California, just saying what's up. I'm at Camp now, chillin'. Ain't nothing to do that much up here, but it's better than the Hall. You get way more rec', get to go on home visits after a month!

You can get write-up's for any little thing though. And people be wanting to run, like me! But I got to stick wit' it, stay here and do my program — 'cause if I run, I might go to YA. But if I do what I got to do, I'm be coo'. So I'm a keep my head up. Peace up.

-Tui Tui

From The Beat: You can't just keep on running, or it's true, you will end up in YA. The judge finally decides to send you to a placement you cannot run from. It's not worth it. Camp is way better, so just hang in there through fair and foul weather.

Number

if i could have anybody's
number

i would call my
lil' brother

who i ain't seen since '01

when we was livin' wit'
my mother

jumpin'
off the walls back in
hawaii

if i called someone famous

then i'd probably be lyin'

success last a minute

my brother last a lifetime

so 'fore you call someone famous

and get that big "ef" you

think how there might be someone closer to

your heart

to talk to

-Buddamilk

From The Beat: Too many young people are living in fantasies, neglecting those who really love them like their families. And if you're separated from a younger brother or sister, you better know that they still miss ya.

A Special Phone Number

If I had anybody's pone number, I would call my girlfriend Jazaa' because I'm very close to her and I could tell her anything. I haven't talked to her for a while. I just want to see how she is doing and what she has been up to. I want to see if she is safe. I don't wan her to be where I'm at.

I regret what I did. If I could turn back time I wouldn't have done what I have done, because I want to be with her. I want to be out there and take care of her. I have stuck by her side for a long time. The neighborhood she stays in is very rough. I just want to make sure she isn't doing drugs and drinking hard liquor. Hearing her voice would make me happy and I know what if she hears mine she would be happy too.

-George

From The Beat: We hope you get to talk to her soon! I'm sure she'd love to receive a love letter from you, we hope you have her address. You are lucky to love someone so much.

Uncomfortable

The way you feel on the street so be a raised up because we be walking through the hood that's what I been pulled over for.

-Brother

From The Beat: Police will pull you over just for looking or walking a certain way - why is that? Tell us the story behind profiling.

Buffie

If I could have anybody's number, it would be Buffie the Body! Yeah, real ninjas know what's up. She go dumb, but I'm going to keep it "PG plus" for all y'all BG's and youngstas. If I had her number though, I would call her and see what it do and what she talkin' 'bout.

I'll tell her like this, "Man, I ain't got time to be hugged up all day wit ya! I'm just tryin' to get mines, cut, and get cashed out! If you ain't tryin' to mess wit', get yo' heel' to clickin' and do it movin'! Because I don't want to do you wrong, I just want to do you right! You feel me?"

But until next time — pass this to Buffie and tell her to hit me up at Camp Sweeney.

-Baby Boi

From The Beat: Well, we can't say that this will sound all too appealing to Buffie, 'cause she's already cashed out, so she doesn't need someone who's always running about trying to work his money problems out all hours of the day and night. It probably won't fit her definition of doing her right.

Smelly Room

i'm locked in a smelly room with nowhere to go

i wanna go home but the judge said no

i got no education but i still ain't slow

the judge can't understand the life that i lead

so he said three years in the "y" is where i need to be

i'm sorry mamma 'cause i live like a gee

but i fiend for money like a crackhead in need

for his drugs of choice which is baking soda and cream

i wanna change but i can't

'cause my friends keep dragging me back.

-Rae

From The Beat: You've got to change no matter what, 'cause a life of lock' up isn't much. So get a j-o-b to get your green. You may need to change your playgrounds, playmates and playthings.

Funeral

What's happening, Beat! It's me Sasquath aka Big Will, from Hayward. I want to give my respect to all and staff up in AlaCo maximum security.

Well, I'm up in here in Camp, trying to do coo' up here, but they be bullshhing on these rules. I don't even get to go home 'till like a few months from now! But that's also my fault, for the case I have. But enough about that; on to the subject:

Funerals. It's not a nice thing to go to, but I go to show respect. In my whole life, I've been to a couple of funerals, but the saddest one I've been to, is the one of my homie, Arturo Romero, RIP.

-Big Will

From The Beat: Thanks for the update on how you're doing. Rise above the write-ups and little irritations at Camp, because it's still your best chance of going home free and clear. So do your best to stay chill. Now tell us about Arturo Romero. Who was he? Why was that the saddest funeral you ever attended? And if you've told us before, tell us again.

Christ's Phone Number

If I had Jesus Christ's number I would call Him and ask for forgiveness and ask for His prayers.

-Dirty Nell

From The Beat: If only it were so easy! The first thing to do, which is in your power, is to forgive yourself.

Uncomfortable In Crowds

I think most people get uncomfortable when they around a lot of people they don't know.

-Patrick

From The Beat: Tell us about a time when YOU were uncomfortable, because the Beat wants to hear about it.

Camp bound

Jaymac, yeah, the one and only, from Hayward, California — I'm in Camp, just doin' my time. And for all y'all in the Hall, keep yo' head up and be safe.

As for me, I'm just chillin', watchin these days fly by.

To The Beat — keep coo', keep doin' y'all job, and keep up the good work — and be safe. Late.

-Jaymac

From The Beat: Thanks for the good words to The Beat, we appreciate it. And keep up that good program you're doing, and do what you can to keep your lil' homie, who we cut out of your piece, doing a good program, too. The best thing is just to do it right and let him see that's how it can be — steady getting HV's.

Uncomfortable

I been in a lot of uncomfortable positions. The most recent uncomfortable feeling I had, was this weekend. I got my patna' cousin pregnant, and I already got a baby on the way by my main!

She say she had a baby, but she got rid of it. And she told me she was in pain for a couple of weeks, and she was sore and bleeding. I ain't 'bout to just leave her wit' that baby though, but I'm already in a relationship that's serious. You feel me? I don't know how I'm a tell my wife. I know I messed up, and if I could take it back I would. I got the symptoms: my stomach and body hella sore! And I been eatin' and sleepin' more. Tell me what y'all think I should do.

-Bra Dummy

From The Beat: To tell you the truth, we're not sure what you mean by "she got rid of it". Did she put it up for adoption? Or do you mean that she aborted it before she came to full term with the pregnancy? Either way, if the baby is gone, what can you do about it? Nothing. You can offer the baby/mama your friendship through a hard time. As for your so-called main, she won't be happy about any of it, but you brought it on yourself. So man up. And in the future, one intimate relationship at a time is enough! Learn from this just how badly you can mess up. Are you really ready to be a father? Then don't have any babies, 'cause every baby deserves a loving and responsible father to care for it.

Just Waiting For The "Y"

What's up Beat! I'm just waiting for the 'Y' to come pick me up. Hopefully they come quick, so I could get this time done and get back to my regular life.

And I'm 'bout to get cashed out 'cause the Sheriff's beat on me at Hayward court for no reason — but you already know they gonna try and work me and say I swung at them first, 'cause that's how the system works. They gonna believe the white sheriffs before they believe the juvenile delinquent, but I ain't tripping.

We're gonna fight it if they try to get away with it, 'cause we were on camera, plus hella witness seen them stomping my head. So, hopefully, when I make back to the hut, I could shine without doing dirt. All right then, Beat.

-Rae

From The Beat: Getting damages for what happened might help you start off well when you get released, but rather than thinking about how it will help you shine — think about how it will give you time to get your job quest together, time to research employment possibilities and look for that good job. 'Cause when you get regular pay, it's easier to live the right way.

Uncomfortable

jail makes me feel uncomfortable
because i have to take a shower
with two other men
and you got to eat with
other males when it's time to eat
and jail makes me feel uncomfortable
when i got to get visits with my parents
and then they tell me when
my parents got to leave

-Tay

From The Beat: For sure, living in "jail" is nothing like living at home with parents. We take it for granted till we lose it, thinking all these other things are more important to us, but they're not.

This Poem

Roses are red
Violets are blue
Sugar is sweet
Just not as sweet as you
My hopes and dreams
My praying and wishing
That you stay away
From all these other females.

-Unknown

From The Beat: What makes you think this person would go ahead and mess with another person? Has this person done so in the past? Don't force yourself to stay in a situation in which you're the one always trying to save the relationship. Some battles are not worth fighting.

All I Know

I grew up on these Oakland streets
Packin' heat and sellin' trees
First time I saw a gun
I was five years old
I was stupid poppin' pills
Now I just sip bo
First time I seen a man shot
I was just turnin' eight
Tryin' to find a way to escape
Cases and getting' money I all I know....

-Bart

From The Beat: If that's all you know, then the only solution is to get out and know some more stuff. You live in Oakland right, which means you live in a city that has way more than just the streets to offer - there's free pools, there's the water, the lake, museums, places where you can record your raps for free, places where you can learn how to shoot a movie. There's places where you can go to learn what you need to get a legit job, so you never have to catch a case again. And then you can live in a wide world, full of chances and freedom. Right now, the world you see, even when you're not locked up, is too small for you!

Santa Rita For My Birthday

Salutations Beat, My honor, loyalty and respect to those that's worthy. Soy Shorty from Max, posted ova' there, watching this time fly.

It's crazy, I remember bein' ova' there in the lil' boys' units. Now it's Max and in a month I'm on my way to Santa Rita. Ritabound. I ain't stressin', you know I'm gon' beat it out. These 11 months came and left hella quick. I done seen hella homies come and go, but me and my camarada Lil' Troublesum been here for the longest. They talkin' 'bout shootin' me to Rita on my 18th b-day. That's June 17th.

What a present, Huh?

I know, that's the same shhh I was thinkin'. I got some loved ones I ain't seen in a while. They got my hermano there on a petty violation. So it's gon' be one big ass reunion. I'm tired of this hall, same old scratch... Nothin' new, but it's coo'. I'm gon' get some new surroundings in a minute. So to all in this East Bay facility, keep it lit and stay forever forward.

This vato is signin' off.

-Young Shorty

From The Beat: We'll never consider you really signed off, no matter how far away you end up, no matter how long you're gone for. Because we know wherever you are you'll be writing, either to us or to someone else, you'll be thinking, and, hopefully, you'll be planning. Planning for a way you are to maximize your chance to positively impact this world as you know you can.

Lil' Sum Sum

Q-Vo Beat, what's good? First let me introduce myself, this that vato Lil' Krazy. But anyways, I'm good — just maintain my program, staying solid. Getting yoked, you feel me?

I got court the first day of June. Hopefully, all goes good and I get released. I'm in here wit' homeboys, and we just chillin' marinatin'. Man, it's been a hot minute since I was out! Soon you'll see me on the outs doing it big wit' my ruca on the side rollin' my blunts —ha ha. But yeah, I'm'a cut it short. So, one love. Alrato.

-H-Fella

From The Beat: So why do so many of our writers stop putting down those positive thoughts, attitudes and goals on the page right when they're just about to finally get released from their cage? It's the saddest thing, 'cause it usually means we hear not too long later about how they got caught up for this or that criminal act and are back doing time somewhere down the line.

It Ain't Cool

I don't think my case is cool. I really don't think I got a fair trial, because I'm on my way to CYA. This is my first case and the judge just washed me. Nine years is what he face and I probably gotta do four, I hope. They even tried to try me as an adult. But I wasn't trippin'.

I just told them to do what they do, feel me? I was ready to fire my public defender, because she was given me hella wolf tickets. But I ain't gon' trip, I'm just gon' suck it up and do my time.

-Jeremiah

From The Beat: Four years is how long it takes to get a college degree. If you know you're going to be in the Y for a long time, then maybe you should try and devise your own college course curriculum... things you'd like to study while you're locked up, so that when you get out, you can actually come out ahead, instead of behind. Ready to apply your learning to a chance at a better job, a better life! You'll still be young when you do get out, you know that.

Oakland Funerals

In Oakland, California, I've been to many funerals. Most of them my family and one was a friend of mine.

My uncle died around the corner from his mother's house while she was at work. The sad thing about it is that he left six kids behind him and all of them is struggling behind.

The next person who died in my family was my grandmother. She died of cancer spreading all through her body. After she passed away, all the family started to break apart.

-Shantell

From The Beat: This is very sad indeed! If you don't mind us asking, what was the cause of your uncle's death? We remember the movie "Soul Food" and how the grandmother in the movie had such a tremendous influence on her family. Your grandmother must have been the same. Is there anything you can do to correct this wrong? In what ways do you think you can help out your six cousins? Keep in mind that in life, we only have one family, so you should do your best to preserve the one you have. Get out of this place and do what you can to make your family one big, happy family again!

RIP Smokey

Q-Vo, Beat. Well now, down to biz: Today's topic is about funerals. Well, to be true with y'all, this question brings back memories of some loved ones that are gone but not forgotten.

One funeral I missed, was my solid homeboy, Smokey, from my barrio. I was locked up when my homeboy got killed. I wish I could have been there for his funeral, 'cause that vato was like my carnal, still is.

I miss you bro', RIP Johnny J; you're always in our memories, carnal. I wish we could've kicked it one more time by the tracks. Well, with all this said, I'm gon' end this with full fashion and style.

-Giggles

From The Beat: It is the tragedy of the street life you live that young men like Johnny aka Smokey, get killed. Those street fights are nothing nice when bullets start to fly. It's not about one more time getting high by the tracks, but about taking your life back from the insanity that first takes your humanity and then your life.

Funerals Of My Dead Family

My big cousin JS and my brothers Big Webb and Mall, all had funerals I didn't get to go to, but I did go to JS's wake, and seeing my big cousin laying there made me cry. Yeah, real ninjas cry when some die.

But me and my cousins did it big at his wake. So HB, JS, RIP — and Webb, bra, I was out when you got killed. I didn't go to your funeral, but I miss you. And Young Mall, you too, bra; I'm gone miss you too.

I'm gone do something that you asked me to do before you died, and that was to get some gold ones! I miss my bra-bra, all of you. RIP to y'all. I love y'all, my ninjas.

-Young Quezy

From The Beat: Getting gold ones is cool, but what you really need to do is stop living the life that got them killed before you die too. There have been enough funerals in your 'hood for you to get the message — time to change and do good, get off the street and start doing what you should.

Check In

What's up wit' it Beat? This that homegirl Juicy (aka) Bianca from Hayward. I been all right I can't complain; stuff's hella bad in here. I been goin' through hella drama but I've been keeping my head up. Handling my business. Waitin' to get up out this place. I go to court on June 13, 2006, it's my Dispositional Hearing.

I'm hopin' to get out of here soon! But anyways I want to send a shout out to all behind these grimy walls. Keep y'all heads up! I hope and pray everything goes well. Well, holla at you later. Love Bianca.

-Bianca

From The Beat: We really hope things go well at court. Last issue you told us you had passed your high-school exit exam—does that mean that you'll be trying to graduate or pass the G.E.D. when you get out? What kinds of plans do you have for yourself so that if you get out you can stay out? Good luck.

Hard Knock Life

What's up with it Beat? This is Onio about to bring the heat. I been doing my thang, I'm a hitter plus a go getter trying to stay out the way from cops and snitches, goin' for riches, but now I need hennessey and weed, mo' weed and E's black and mild and a girl's house, 'cause we bred to die. Why you wanna hate all these haters, see that I'm a beast, I'm going to live on these streets and I'm going to die on these streets.

-Onio

From The Beat: Die on these streets? Why? Do you really want to die? Or do you believe you have no choice? Tell us, because we want to understand where you're coming from. Which one is it?

One Year and Counting

What's up with it man. This yo 'boy Lil' Troublesum. Well, I don't like funerals 'cause they're depressing. And I'm uncomfortable HERE. I've been here for one year already, and there isn't a day I feel comfortable in here, put it like this I still don't even know the time schedule in here. Fo'get the hall.

-Lil Juanito

From The Beat: One year, huh. Ordinarily when someone hits an anniversary you feel like you want to congratulate them, but obviously we won't do that in this case. We will ask you this though - what do you think you've learned in this year? Anything? Has it just been a waste? Do you feel like you're growing from it, or being stunted?

Thinking Out Loud

Females, they got big booties
I use to remember the time I thought females had cooties

They look hella fine and hella sick
I like them females that's hella thick
Talking to females is the things I like to do
I like it when females be calling me boo boo!

I think that's hella cool
But I learn to be with a girl and be true
Baby I hope you feel the same way too

-L. Beezie and Kam

From The Beat: Hey youngstas not sure which one of you wrote this, but you will see in time a good women will not tolerate your childish thinking. Then again we appreciate your honesty and we hope you are loyal, honest and sincere with your lady otherwise you will lose that girl. We also hope yo usee that there is more to a lady than her body, like a big heart and a good solid mind.

That Phone Number

I would call my friend Deandray, because he told me call him when I got out of court. But I never got out of court. I know he is worried about me, plus my birthday is coming up and we had plans. I would also call my best friend Michael. Because I know he miss me I just disappeared without a goodbye.

-Marie

From The Beat: It's so hard to leave without saying goodbye. We hope you connect with your friend(s) real soon.

Peanut's Funeral

I've been to a funeral before I came in here I went to my ninja Rodney Bohanan's funeral. They called him "Peanut." He got shot in the back of the head.

I went to his funeral in April, there was hecca people there and hecca people was crying I felt hecca mad because he was gone. I went to his wake and his funeral and I got like two or three shirts of his picture on them, and I miss my ninja. But they caught the ninja that did this.

-Roland

From The Beat: Ugly. Tragic. We hope you can now, in Peanut's honor, become part of the solution to saving the streets of Oakland and not being apart of the problem that is wiping out way too many young people. Come on Roland!

Call On...

If I had someone's number, I would call my girl that I just got wit', dang she was bad; I didn't even get to call her.

I'm goin' to tell you the story alright: me and my twin brother was in my van on day and I went to the store and then I seen this bad girl so I went up to her and spit my game, I would have told y'all what I said but some ninja might steal my lines. So my good game worked so I pulled her and got her number. So we smoked our weed and then we didn't have nothin' to do so we called some girls, they was sisters, and we went to a hotel. So we was then doin' our thang.

I got to go so I goin' to cut it short, next thing I know the cops pulled up and busted us. That's messed up.

-Stoneface

From The Beat: Interesting story. You must have some pretty tight game, but what does that mean really? That you can get a girl's number in a store or get some girls to come to a hotel with you? At some point do you want someone to really care for you?

Second Chance At Life

When I look back at the past, and the stuff I went through,
I feel so blessed and I want to thank you

I've committed so many sins yet you still love me

For you gave your only begotten son to die for me

When I seem weak and I can't carry on

You're there to pick me up and help me carry on.

You gave us a second chance at life, and now I can see,

Life is too short and if I want I can be anything I want to be

So I'm here saying I'm going to make change

And I'm going to respect myself and not live life in shame.

-Tea Etta

From The Beat: Self respect is probably the best gift you can give to yourself. We're glad you found a source of strength and wish you the best on your journey.

Staying Strong

Yo' what's up Beat. It's been a very long time since I've written in The Beat— hopefully this is the last time.

But I've got real shhh on my mind that I've really got to get off. I live in West Oakland and I've noticed that ninjas is layin' down so fast that I can't even say goodbye and my bra-bra's is getting locked up but I can't even write them but right now.

I'm'a be out real soon and I want every one in here to stay solid and stay up...Much Love.

In loving memory: Mezee, Meach, Daron, Naydawn, Raymond, Jack, Fila, Tracy, Criddy Bo, we love you and we miss you.

-Mrs. O

From The Beat: It's true—so many young people are dying. It's so sad that in so many parts of the world people have no choice in the violence that rips apart their lives (there is war, disease, and famine) but that in places like West Oakland and all over, people choose violent lifestyles. We wish it wasn't so and hope that you choose something different.

Death

Yes I've been to so many funerals. One of my friend's funeral, his name was Willie. After that funeral I went all out. And after my dad, Ballplayer's funeral I went bad on my uncle and I got in my auntie's Hummer H2 and left. A few days later I came to visit his burial ground. RIP Ballplayer Willie

-Perie

From The Beat: It is very hard to accept death of those we care about. Sounds like you did not handle it too well. We probably wouldn't either. Is there anything you would do differently the next time? Did you learn anything from the loss of these family members?

Funerals In East Palo Alto

Roughe it ain't coo' being in here while yo' cousin got shot and killed. Man, that shhh wasn't coo', but anyways the point is that I was locked up and I wasn't there to be at his funeral that's why I wrote it

-Young Taliban

From The Beat: It's all tragic, you incarcerated and a cousin murdered. We can only hope and pray that your cousin's death will help you see the light to a better lifestyle.

Need To Change

I'm jus tryin' change my ways
Just tryin' to remember all the good days

When we use to hang out

Going to hella places and tryin' to get loud

Now I'm going to Boys Republic

And stressing and hella sick

I got CYA commitment

I'm thinking twice about running

But I'm scared to go to the pen.

I'm just missing my female and my old life
Tryin' to get out of here, tryin' to find someone who would ride

Not like suckas who would leave

Checking out ninjas off my sleeve

If I'm out of here I'm gonna try to change

Tryin' to get out of trouble, off of range.

-L Beezie

From The Beat: From what we thought were good times, how fast things get out of control and our freedom is taken from us. We hope this go round is your wake up call? We do not want to see you in the pen either, but if you go back to your old life odds are greater that you will fall back into them traps. You need to do more than "try."

Untitled

What's good Beat this is Lil Grinch from Hayward over here in this baby unit. Damn I can't believe I'm back in here again. I was at my group home, at school and I robbed this little kid so they arrested me. I'm hopefully going back. But now I want to run hella bad but all the homeboys are telling me not to run. But I don't know yet, so I'll just wait and find out. Write next week and tell ya'll what's crackin'.

-Lil' Grinch

From The Beat: A stubborn fool will run and jeopardize his/her freedom, for what? Another round in the hall? And then what? More time in a tougher group home or a YA Alternative? Wake up youngsta! It can and it will get worse if you are not serious.

Juvy Is Not Cool

Step in step out.

You aint hard.

You aint solid 'cause you in here.

This don't make you harder.

You belong to the county,

you ain't gon' take off.

Nope, you aint.

And if you do, you still ain't tight.

'Cause you got some counselors ready for you.

Got that pen got that spray.

Now what you got to say.

Yeah you somebody.

Step on the outs now it really ain't cute.

Bopper or rip you pick and choose.

So do what you do;

step in step out 'cause it's way better on the outs.

- Mrs. O

From The Beat: So, if it's way better on the outs, what will you do to stay there once you're released?

CYA Over Your Head

Yes, I do and it's hard because I have to do six months in this unit with no bad reports. It's hard because staff is always throwing it in my face and my peers always test me everyday, but I have to deal with it, so to all y'all with Y.A. over your head, keep your head up and don't get put down and don't give up.

Being in this unit is hell. I get mad because I don't have no bail. If you be cool and learn how to be a man, you might get some loving.

-Rush

From The Beat: We left over the remaining part of your piece because it appeared to us like you were trying to diss someone in The Beat, and that friend, is not allowed. EVER! Do you think you'll be able to be in this unit for those six months without incident? Friend, there's always going to be people testing you in all kinds of different ways. Don't allow these people get the best of you because they want to see you get mad and slip up. You have to be bigger than them and realize that if you give in, you'll have to put up with their nonsense for more than six months because you could get time added to your sentence. We hope you follow your own words of advice and keep YOUR head up, don't allow anyone to put YOU down, and don't give up. If the unit is challenging request a move to another unit!

Anybody's number to call

If had anybody number I would call I will call someone that can either get me out of trouble or offer something I need or get to give me advice.

-Looking For a Hotline

From The Beat: We wish we could help you, and if you need advice we can try to provide it. The best advice we can offer right now is to keep a positive outlook and think about the trouble you're in and why you're in it. Is there anything you would do differently next time? When you get out of your present situation will you make those difficult changes in your life so that you don't end up back in the same trouble? We wish you luck.

Don't Hate Me

Don't hate me 'cause I am beautiful

Don't hate me 'cause my hair

Don't hate me 'cause my mom's sweet

Don't hate me 'cause I just be me

Don't hate me 'cause I can't be beaten

Don't hate me 'cause I stay fitted from my head to my feet

Don't hate me 'cause I am the best on these streets

Don't hate me 'cause I am a beast and can't be deceased.

-Rush

From The Beat: Who hates you? Why would anyone hate you? How does it make you feel when people hate on you? Have you ever hated on another person? Why do you think people, in general, hate on other people?

A Funeral

Funerals are very uncomfortable 'cause you have to look at a body that you had just saw a couple of days before they past. Man that's not a cool sight to see, especially when he or she was a very close friend or relative. If it was someone I knew I would just get high. I mean so high that I will be on the very next day off pills, weed, and drank oh yeah and don't forget the ports for the booster, all them drugs would just ease my thoughts. My mind will be in a whole different world and I just forget that I even went to the funeral and then I will go be with my main girl and feel good about it.

-Altered Mind

FROM THE BEAT: Your way of dealing with the pain of losing someone (which is a common reaction) is by avoiding it and medicating so that you can go to a different place—one that doesn't really exist. The main problem is that you will always have to come back to the real world at some point, and usually you will be worse off than before. The come-down from drugs and alcohol is linked to depression and of course will leave your body in a bad way... Someday you'll have to confront that pain, and putting it off usually makes it worse.

Suave Returns

I'ma tell you how I'm feelin'? Feeling shhhy. They tryna wash me. They tryna stop a g, but they ain't got nothin' on me. Me and my boy they ain't got nothin' on us. To all that are fighting cases, don't go out, fight it 'til the end. Keep it solid.

-Lil' Suave

From The Beat: Welcome back to our pages, Lil' Suave! It's great to see you in The Beat again, and even better to see you say one thing that we hope you believe: 'Fight it 'til the end.' But what does that mean? Fight the system? Fight enemies? Fighting for survival? Freedom? We'd like to see you fight for yourself and your future — your right to an education, your right to live somewhere where you don't have to worry about getting shot, your right to a future where you can raise strong children, own your own home. Is that worth fighting for, and how would you do it?

Oh Funerals

I have had two friends and I been locked up or I have been in a group home. When it happened I was mad that I couldn't go to the funerals, but good thing that I didn't go. I would of have done a lot of crazy stuff because they were very close to me; they were like brothers to me.

-Mourning

From The Beat: It's hard to lose friends and not be there to grieve. We're sorry you weren't there but wonder what kinds of crazy things you would have done.

Doing Time

I know I'm gonna be here
With a release no where near

Way off in September

But I'll always remember

What the hood looks like

And how I used to ride my bike

Around the hood looking for knocks

To get off my last few bops

But that won't happen again no time soon

'Cause it's already June

And I been here since March 22

I swear I've learned my lesson

No one deserves to serve that much time

They tell me I have nothing but time

But my time is worth gold

I don't wanna be here until I'm eighteen years old

Seeing all these different girls come and go

And they say I'm the one with no hope

Because I sold a little dope.

-Y's Lady

From The Beat: We think that anyone's time is worth gold because it's limited, but what were you doing on the outs that was worthy of your time? Selling dope doesn't seem like a very positive way to pass the hours, so how will you better spend your days when you get out?

Uncomfortable Ride

When I go to court and they wake me up to go to court I already imagine the van because it's uncomfortable for me because they put five people in one side and you all squished in.

-Detainee

From The Beat: That does sound uncomfortable.

Anybody's number

If I can have anybody's number I would have the presidents number so I can tell him how I feel and ask him why he's sending young soldiers...

-U-S Citizen

From The Beat: It seems like you were going to ask the president some pretty important questions...we'd love to hear the rest next time.

Getting Hit by A Car

When I got hit by a car, I got real messed up after that happened. I went bad on everyone and I ended up in the Hall. I came back and forth to this place, I need to stay out. I don't need to blame everyone for what happened to me.

I been bad a lot of my life, and then I need to slow down now.

-Lil' Ant

From The Beat: Just a question, young Anthony. Do you feel you have BEEN bad, or just done some bad things? Because those are two totally different prospects.

RIP Boo Boo

we miss you, my homie

that whole block

wish you were still here

we just can't stop

thinking about you man

if you was here

things will be the same

but when you left us

shhh start changing

the hood love you a lot

come back and you will see

your girl mo that girl love you so much

she cry about you so much

i know how she feel

just come back my ninja

love you — r i p — with love

-Sarillo

From The Beat: It wrenches the heart when we hear you calling for you dead homie to come back to the block, 'cause we know you know he can't — but love doesn't stop with wanting only what's possible. Still, if he came back to the same, then eventually you'd be feeling the same pain; or he'd be feeling it for you. So change your ways before you end up like Boo Boo, dead and gone, bitterly missed by your loved ones.

Like A Disease

Days been easin' into my mind

Knowin' I got to do this time

Dreams is bein' crushed

My freedom is held away

No control to my life

Lock down like a disease

Kept away from the streets

-Lil' Kev Mien

From The Beat: The disease isn't you — the disease is the streets! You are the one who's been infected, with hood sickness. But you have the cure and you know it. What is that cure?

Uncomfortable

I'm the type of person that just comfortable around anyone that I have a good feeling with.

-unknown

From The Beat: Does that mean you feel uncomfortable around people who don't give you a good feeling? That makes sense. Next time tell us more...for instance, what do people do to give you a bad or good feeling?

Funerals

my boys are gone

i miss my cousin

and my dead ninjas

i did go to my big cousin's wake

and i miss that ninja

-No Name

From The Beat: Be part of the problem that got 'im and you add to the pollution, or be part of the solution — quit the game that everybody's steady losing and start winning for a change.

City By The Bay

What it do, this Young Sticky from the Little City By The Bay known as Newark. I would like to start by saying what's up. Most of all I would like to say RIP to my love one Smokey gone but never forget and RIP to all the fallen homies.

Me I'm go to see what happens to me on June 7--go home or placement, but it's up to my PO. I'm just kickin' back thinking how next time I can do it better and not come to jail letting time pass me by. I'm not mad, I'm not going to be here forever, so just postin' in my room.

-Young Sticky

From The Beat: Do you mean you're thinking about how to live a better life so you don't come back to the halls, or do you mean you're thinking about how to commit your crimes better? If it's the first option, of course we're all behind you and encourage you to do that thinking. If it's the second, we hope you know it's almost always just a matter of time before people get caught, then it's just time--your life--slipping away.

Somebody To Call

if i could call somebody
i would call god

-D-Lo

From The Beat: What would you say? Don't you call God every time to drop to your knees to pray? Or would you ask God to explain his ways?

In My Hood

What's up this Young Walley talking about the hood and what goes on in the hood.

The hood is like a video game you got the drug deals, haters, and fakers who be tryin' to be your bro but really be tryin' to keep you from shining. Then you got the rippers who be try to get in your pockets. For the bro who be getting money never let your guard down, the game is like chess.

-Young Walley

From The Beat: It's a serious game when you're playing with real lives instead of with pawns on a board. We think it's probably a hard game to play too, with all of the stress and danger the players have to live with. Easy to say, but you sure as hell do not have to play this game! There's plenty of folks in your hood who stay away from the bull and live honest lives, right!?

Our Motivation

we make money
we take money
we babies makin' babies
you leave your baby
all that add up
you end up in the county hall
then to rita and quentin
but your kids bail you out

-Yung Uso

From The Beat: Hello? You kids bail you out? What, after you put in twenty years of incarceration 'cause you couldn't stop taking someone else's money. Nah, this isn't funny. Get a j-o-b so you can live free and raise your family right. Babies having babies is nothing cool; it just means more lost children in a world too cruel.

Hood Fellas

Well what's crackin Beat, it's me Spooks kickin' back up in this unit. Man I can't believe I'm back in this place. This time I caught a pistol charge with gang activity or sum shhhh. But it's nothing. To all those that know me I'ma ride this out like nada.

Before I end this I wanna send my utmost love and respects to those fighting them cases! Other then that much love to all, keep your heads up. 'Till the next time Beat. Alratos.

-Spooks

From The Beat: We really hate to think about all of the guns out there--young people shooting other young people. As for you and your young life, wake up youngsta time is truly ticking as is your freedom.

What It Do Beat!

This is Lil' Marquitos coming at you. Well for my topic I would like it to be "visional" to those who know me. Out in the hood things are rough for those who live in these Hayward streets. Though we still maintain with our heads above normal rate 'cause we all do the same thing; y'all know what I mean!

When a young man wants to do a change in their life, they get that second thought. I don't gotta lie! I think about it sometimes. But I love my family 'cause that's all we got! To lie to a man you have to show tha man real talk! You gotta remember though! The ones who showed you how things really go on are the one's you will always remember.

RIP Big Head, Jim, Gimp, and Freddie. One love. And to the rest of thw raza keep your heads until the end of time. I thank the Lord; for every night there's a better day.

-Lil' Marquitos

From The Beat: That second thought. It seems that no matter who you are or what you're doing, there's usually that second thought--that wondering "what if it was different?" Well, what are your second thoughts? How do you think things could be different?

Rest In Paradise

I think of all the homies who have left me behind. Damn it's like the list goes on and on...first it was James, then Payaso, then big head, then Vicente, and I can't forget Mark and Hugo, and the most recent one lil' Arturo. I went to every one of those funerals but two. Every time I think of all these homies who left us with nothing but memories. I loved all these people in different ways, I'll always remember them. But I can't forget my Grandma and Uncle, I loved them the most. (formerly Lil' Mamiz)

-Lil' T

From The Beat: No matter how many people we've lost, it never gets easier. In what ways do we remember them? Does it help to remember only in sadness or should we look for ways to remember them with actions? By doing something good for yourself or someone else in memory of them, you can make something of that person live on.

Some On-topic Thoughts

Being at a funeral of a loved one affects me because when it's over it stays in your thoughts. I've been to more than one funeral. My reaction has changed after a couple but I still feel the same. All I do before a funeral is I like to meet up with the family and friends.

If I had anybody's number I would call my boyfriend right away.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: It definitely sticks with you when you've been to a funeral--it's a good time to be around loved ones, to share feelings and memories and try to process the hurt.

My Words

To keep it real I might change, then again I might not. Whatever path that God has chose for me that's the path I take.

On the real I'm a crazy person on the inside.

Maybe I got a evil mind.

Maybe it's because I'm from Fairfield.

But to keep it real I have been trying to stay out of trouble, but it hasn't been working for me.

But for real I can't change who I am and I don't plan on it any time soon.

So 'till next time: one love, one life.

-Low-Kee

From The Beat: You can only blame a situation on the will of God for so long. God gives us choices, and we all have the ability to choose to change or to remain the same. We're glad you're trying to stay out of trouble and know there must be some way to make it work. Good luck and get focused!

Broham Power

B is for brothers

R is for respect

O is for original gangsters

H is for hustler

A is for arithmetic progressions of cash

M is for macking and stacking

P is for prepared for anything

O is for being on top

W is for the women we get

E is for everybody respect it

R is for no remorse

StoneFace/Lil' Neph

From The Beat: Nice collaboration. We hope the R isn't just for the respect that you get but also for the respect that you give. Reciprocity, in other words.

Camp

Beat you ninjas ain't coo'. Every time I write when y'all come through y'all don't eva put none of my stuff in.

Anyway, these ninjas talkin' bout sending me to camp. The cold part is my PO asking for camp, and she ain't even come and interviewed me or nothin'. I be in this thang for two months, go back to court on the first. It just don't seem right that a PO could just make a decision like that without even giving me a chance to speak for myself.

-Jungleboy

From The Beat: That is cold - this system is overcrowded and overburdened, and it's frustrating to hear that all these decisions got made without your input. But you can't let it get you down, OK? Don't let it weaken your resolve to make the most of camp and to make the most of your life. That's the best way to keep yourself free of other people controlling your freedom. As for your piece - we hope by now you've seen your work published, and we do apologize for the wait. Remember the publishing cycle takes four weeks to go through, so for example this piece you're reading right now was written four Tuesdays ago. Be patient with us and you'll see yourself right in these pages.

One More, One Love

Wassup Beat this is Lil Neph. Well I've got one more week, one more Beat, one of everything almost! I'm very happy that I'm going to leaving this place in like eight days! I get out on the ninth. And my birthday is next week on the sixth. I got my whole weekend planned out and half of my weekdays too! I have to do a little job on the Monday that I get out so I can have some money to put me up on my feet! And the job is legit! Then after that is finishing school then at the same time looking for a job and a little place of my own. I can't wait to get back to society and live life the way it is supposed to be lived. But I'm out for now. Stay up to all out there! One love.

-Lil' Neph

From The Beat: Congratulations! Good luck and happy birthday.

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-Regretful

-Iggy

-Willie

-P Deazy

—j— —j—

-Anonymous

-Jungleboy

-Brandon

I would call the Dali Llama, just to hear what he has to say. And Carl Sagan, because I'm very interested in extraterrestrial life.

-Anonymous

So alrato. Keep your heads up.

-Francisco

YGC stinks

I could've got out of jail today. Someone was saying that I supposed to go to a group home, but they was taking too long to pick me up, so hopefully I get out on my next court day and never come back to YGC.

People always say that when you in B1, you get out faster. I don't believe that. I been in YGC for a long time. The food stink, the, the rooms stink, the clothes stink, the whole YGC stink. This place is garbage. I hate taking a shower with other boys—that's not good.

-Andre B1

From The Beat: We hope when you get out of here, you'll remember the smell of the place so that when you're tempted to do the things that brought you here (and you will be tempted), you'll think long and hard about risking it. When you say you hope you never come back, what goes along with that hope? What are you going to do differently to make that hope a reality?

Aunty, Thank You For Helping Me

I would call my Aunty Cat who died 'cause of cancer and tell her, "Thank you for helpin' me when I was a lil' baby." That's why I would call her or would want to see her again.

-Big Aaren B1

From The Beat: What a very sweet reason for wanting to talk to your aunty again. We are sure she already knew how grateful you were to her, and how much you loved her — and we're equally sure she loved you just as much. We're sorry she passed, but as long as you are alive, she will continue to live through you.

How It Is In Heaven

If I had a phone call, I will call my sister' boyfriend. He passed away. I will see how it is in heaven.

-Rico B1

From The Beat: What if he told you that heaven is truly Paradise, but that you have to change the way you live your life to get there? What would you do?

I Think 'Bout You/Miss You

What's on my mind is some other-ass shhh, like I keep on thinking about my ex-lady. I really miss her, real talk. I miss kissing her and making her feel good. I remember times when me and her used to kick it. When we kicked it, she made me feel special the way she kissed me. I wish I still kept in contact with her.

Damn! She is hella pretty, full El Salvadorian, the most beautiful thing that I ever saw in my life. I wish I never could have broke up with her. I wish she was still in my life. I had a second chance with her but I messed up because I was with my ex-girl and I didn't want to cheat on her so I just dodged her. I wish God gave one last chance with her. I promise I will make things right.

My ex- girl meant a lot to me, and still does and always will. I wanna show her how sorry I am. I wanna show her how much I am sorry so we can have a good relationship and live right. I'm gonna try and get hold of her when I get out so I can have my lady by my side. I really miss her. I love her long beautiful hair. She is about 5'2" and light skinned, and has nice sexy lips. She is just beautiful.

-BJ B4

From The Beat: We hope you are not spending so much time thinking about your ex-girl that you are not spending time thinking about yourself, and how you are going to avoid coming to places like this when you're free. We also hope you are able to have your lady by your side and live right, but even if she is not interested in getting back together with you, we believe you should still be working on yourself to make you the person you want to be and the person you should be. When you are living life right — and loving yourself for it — you'll be surprised how many good and beautiful young ladies will be attracted to you.

Trapped

We one two brothers of a same kind
Sometimes I wish I didn't pick the way I live my life
We trapped in the ghetto wit' guns, murder and crack sales
It seem like everybody I know is blowing in the wind
I give thanks to all my people in the struggle
It is rough and you feeling all alone
Smile for me

-Smack B4

From The Beat: What do you do when you're feeling all alone, Smack? If you wish you picked a different way to live your life, why not start making those choices now? Do you contribute to the trap you feel you're in, and is there anything you can do to contribute to getting out of it?

I Miss My Little Brother

Man, why they have to take us away from each other? While I sit in my cell I think about all the good and bad things that we went through, living where there ain't no punks. But the only person I trust is my little brother because nowadays you can't trust nobody love.

-Menace B2

From The Beat: We're sorry that you and your brother have been separated, but do you really wonder why? Don't you have a good idea what it was that led to this break up? What is the hardest thing about keeping yourself from breaking the law and keeping your family together? What has happened to you that makes you distrust everyone except your brother?

I Beat Up A Fire Alarm

I came to YGC for no reason. I was walking down the hallway and a substitute dean said something, and then I said, "Uhh." He said, "You going home for today," and then I got mad and took my anger out on a fire alarm and shattered the glass. Then I went to YGC for an anger management class. And then they changed they mind an' took me and changed my clothes an' sent me to B1.

My PO said if he finds out I was telling the truth, I can get out tomorrow. When I get out, I'm going to change my life.

-Shaquille B1

From The Beat: We think something is missing from the way you've told this story, Shaquille — either a tone of voice or a specific thing that was said or done. If we were to ask the substitute dean what his version of this story is, what would he tell us? But even if you related this event exactly as it happened, we can't agree that destroying a fire alarm is "no reason" for punishment. What do you think the appropriate response is for someone who destroys the property of others? We do hope you get out of here soon, and we're happy that you plan to change your life. What are

Moving Away

'S'up Beat? I am back again. I got court in two weeks. Who knows where I will be? But one thing, I am moving for sure once I do get released. For me, I guess the only way to stay out of trouble is to move away. It's gonna be hard for me, but that's how I'm gonna have to handle my business. Well, it's better then being in the system all locked up.

-Lil' E B2

From The Beat: If you are not ready to change, Lil' E, it really doesn't matter where you move to or what kind of environment you are in, you will be still tempted. If you are ready to change, you'll find a way to do it wherever you live. The fact that you're back suggests you're not all that serious about changing. Having said that, however, we think that moving out of the place where you know too well how to get into trouble is not a bad idea at all. But before you make that geographical change, ask yourself one question: "Are you ready to give up the street life?"

Uncomfortable

Damn! Being in this hellhole, this hell cell, is uncomfortable, but I'm 'bout to go to a grouper for like seven or nine months, and then ya boy off probation, back to the block with my fam bam. Like what it do. And The Beat don't leave no response to this one. Leave it blank because the block is not the reason why I'm in this. Peace.

-Art Cash B4

From The Beat: There's no such thing as The Beat leaving a piece blank. We respond to every piece with publish, and this is no exception. Whether the block is the reason you're here (this time) or not, it is the place that is guaranteed to put you in a place you don't want to be. We all make choices, so you will have to accept the responsibility for the choices you make. (We made the choice not to print your piece on funerals because it seemed to be very disrespectful.)

Funerals

Man, what's up with da Beat Within? I just wanna say something about this murder shhh that's happening in the Bay, mainly in San Francisco. Man, one of my ninjas just got knocked off, RoloPo Markus Law Man. When I got the news that chu was gone, boy, I wanted to slide through and knock two of they ninjas off.

Man, you deeply missed bra. Me and yo' dad still kick it in the towers, but ever since you passed, the beef been jumpin' off hard as hell. Moms ain't been the same. She still stress trying to move out of the projects.

Me? This shhh hit me hard as hell, man. I got nothing but revenge in my heart for the bastard that took you out, Big Bra. I swear we took it straight to the streets, but that don't even matter 'cause you in a better place. I'ma see you in thug mansion, baby boy. RIP.

-Baby Grimey B4

From The Beat: First, we are sorry that your homeboy got taken out. But second, what we read every day in these pages tells us that what is going on in the Bay is a kind of sickness — and not just the actual killing, but having to think about it all the time.

Without My Brother

I feel uncomfortable when I'm without my little brother. He's locked up for robbery. To me he's my lil' homie. When he read this I want him to know that I love him and miss him a lot. I'm going to miss him when he leaves to the group home.

I'm leaving on 6/6/06. I' going to smoke fat when I get out. I just want my little brother to know that when he gets out he's gonna have stacks in his pocket and hella clothes on his back. He's gonna have most of everything he wants.

-Big Daddy Uce Max B4

From The Beat: While we appreciate just how much you miss your little brother, we cannot let The Beat be used for you to threaten anyone, so we took out a sentence or two. At the same time, we are very worried that you're desire to make sure your brother has "stacks in his pocket" when he gets out will only lead to more separation — and for lots longer. Don't just think about the goal you're after, also think about the possible consequences of going after that goal. If you get yourself locked up again, you'll be no good to your brother at all...

Uncomfortable

I feel uncomfortable here in juvenile.

From The Beat: Good! It's designed to make you feel uncomfortable so that when you're tempted to repeat the behavior that brought you here, you'll think long and hard before doing it.

-D-M B1

Staying The Same

I woke up one day and said to myself that the way I'm living ain't for me. I been back and forth to halls, and standing on that same corner for too long, I'm going to fight to stay the same because money is the game and that's my name.

-M Money B4
From The Beat: You us scratching our heads with this one, MM. You start so boldly by declaring that the lifestyle you've chosen isn't for you, and that you've been coming to the halls for too long. But then you end by declaring that you aren't going to change! What we don't understand is how you can expect the consequences to change if you don't. And if the consequences don't change, the only money you'll be making is for the system that makes is living off you.

Calling Trina

If I had anybody's phone number I would call Trina, the rap artist, because to me she is one of the sexiest females ever. She is sexy to me because the shape of her body is perfect to me, from her legs to her hips to her ass to her stomach and breasts and lips and etc...

The way she acts is the way I want the girl I have act. What I'm tryna say is I wanna sexy girl that acts ghetto fabulous and that's who and why I would call her

-Skeamin' B4
From The Beat: Do you think she'd take your call? If so, what's the first thing you'd say to her? If she knew you were in the hall, what do you think she would say to you?

Funerals Are Uncomfortable

Yes I have been to a funeral, many funerals. One was my favorite male cousin that got killed, and I went to the funeral. When I got there people start shooting and fighting. And the casket fell over, and his baby mom/family was crying. And everybody else were going stupid and they were smoking weed and stuff. That's why I don't go to funerals, because it hurts me to see somebody I love that's never going to see again, and to see people do something to mess up some good shhh they were going good.

That's why I do not go to funerals because there's always something to screw it up. If you do something bad it'll come back as karma. Step your game up.

-Shally-M GU
From The Beat: We can't imagine people being so disrespectful at a funeral! We're sorry your cousin lost his life, and we're sorry that his funeral was turned into such fiasco. We hope you don't have to attend any more funerals for a long time.

Calling My Girl

Today is May 30th, 2006. If I had anybody's phone number I would call my girl. But I do got her number. The reason I would call her is because it's her birthday and she carrying my baby. So happy birthday baby. Love,

-Lazy B4
From The Beat: Well, we understand why you would want to call your baby's mama to wish her happy birthday, but since you already have her number — and you could have called anyone in the world — it seems like a wasted call to us.

Uncomfortable

I feel very uncomfortable when my money is not right. I even feel like I don't want to come outside because I know I am going to want something. Money is power and power is respect. Without that it's nothing.

I seen money since I have been born. Money will get you killed you will stall for money. Keep your mind on your money and money on your mind.

-Lil' Mika GU
From The Beat: We can see where having money on your mind has gotten you. Do you see? Is power really respect? Do you respect the President of the United States? He has more power than just about anyone on earth, but that does not mean he's worthy of respect. Some of the poorest people we know are the most respectable; some of the richest people we know are the least respectable. Where you are, you can't even touch money, so does that tell you anything? Besides money, what else is important to you? What else do you think about?"

Showering With Ninjas

I feel uncomfortable bein' here because the thing that we do I think it is not for me. I don know... Some people might like it, but I don't. I feel uncomfortable takin' showers with ninjas, and I know other people do to.

-Gb B4
From The Beat: We start to worry when young people start feeling comfortable here, because this place is designed to make you uncomfortable. In fact, we hope you're so uncomfortable being here that when you touch down you'll never come back here again!

Me Myself And I

I live in a uneasy world, always on my toes and constantly looking behind my back as if someone was there. I'm one of a kind in my society, and many of my kind don't come along as others do.

Some may say that I stand out, but I think I blend in just a well as the others do. Green, khaki, and white is what we all are in here. No color or religion matters where I live. It's all about who you really are, what you can do to stay away from this machine-less assembly line. In here I am me, myself and I.

-Rb B4
From The Beat: We wish you had filled in more details in this piece, because you've made us very curious. For example, why are you one of a kind, and why does your kind not come along too often? What makes you different? Do you feel like you're being processed like a part on an assembly line? If so, what will you do when you are free to be the individual you are — without putting yourself back here?

Deaths And Funerals

Death and funerals is not easy. You stick to yo'self you'll live freely.

Young kids die by random shot.

Callin' my folks wondering who got got.

You can be a bye-stander or you can be the target. People's in they grave 'n' I'm wondering how it started

It's beef in tha air.

Everybody wanna be hard 'n' never a square.

If you ain't listen, you betta open ya ears

'Cause what I'm sayin' you really need to hear

-Island Boy B4

From The Beat: We agree that young people should hear the message you're leaving with The Beat. Are you listening to yourself?

Uncomfortable When . . .

Uncomfortable... I feel uncomfortable when people put me on the spot
I feel uncomfortable when I can't do things other people can do
I feel uncomfortable when people say things about the way I look
I feel uncomfortable when my woman tired to do things I don't want her to do

I feel uncomfortable when I'm around too many people
I feel uncomfortable when I know I'm about to do something that will make other people uncomfortable

CITO feel uncomfortable when he don't have his purple
CITO gone you punk rock. Uncomfortable...

-Cito B4
From The Beat: When does Citofeel comfortable?

Why Not Use A Condom?

I remember last week when my mom came to visit me and she was telling me about the appointments for my girl. My mom's gonna go with her to the check-up for the sonogram. Then out of nowhere my mom ask my why I didn't wrap it up.

-Lazy B4
From The Beat: We think your mom was asking you a grown-up and responsible question. Being parents is a full-time responsibility, and if you can't guarantee that you'll be there for your child in every way, then "wrapping up" seems like the most intelligent and responsible thing to do.

Caught

The reason why I'm in YGC is because the police had caught me and so they had said I got caught for robbery.

- Caught B1
From The Beat: No, the reason why you're in YGC is that you did something that gave power to the police to catch you and put you here. If you only look at the police behavior and not your own, we're afraid you're going to be a regular visitor here... If you were just now starting out the day you were arrested, what would you do differently?

Funerals

Funerals are sad to go to. I have went to a lot of funerals during these past years, and the cold thing about it is every person funeral I went to was my age or younger an' that's really sad. Just imagine how they moms felt when they child died.

Just recently my bra Marc got killed and I wasn't able to attend to his funeral. You don't know how I felt, but its coo'. That's why they karma, b.
I love you bra, always. RIP Marc.

-Al-Bundy B5
From The Beat: We are so sorry to read that your brother was killed, Al. And worse, you were unable to attend his funeral. That's shady. Was he living the kind of life that puts so many young people's lives in danger, or just in the wrong place at the wrong time? And what about you? How are you keeping yourself out of those places and putting yourself on a different path with a better ending?

I Like Seeing People Alive And Happy

A funeral I went to when it was sad. I don't like going to funerals. I don't like seeing people in the casket—they be all white. I like seeing people alive and happy.

-Philip B1
From The Beat: That's what we like, too, Philip. What are you going to do to guarantee a long life?

They Love Ya Boy

They love ya boy 'cause I blow big 'dro' and I go crazy at Cancun with six 'ho'es wit' the poke up nose

blowin' smoke 'dro' through my nose clocking a foe fo'sho' my eyes half closed

I'm ducking these scramble can't see hittin' bigger figgers like J.T in stolen Mercedes in EPA

mad mouthing your lady back to San Francisco in her H.2

sipping some gray goose ready for war like babe Ruth you know Young Boog still be ducking the law flipping bricks to make some progress quick 'cause what you making at yo' job ain't shhh kill all static matic like the TV show locked up but when I touch down we going to touch key fa'show.

-Young Boog B5

From The Beat: Sounds like you and your homies really know how to have fun. But what we want to know is whether there's some connection between all that good fun and the good fun you're now having as a guest of the county... We want to encourage you to take the time you are now forced to spend locked up here to do some planning for a future that does not include a return trip to the hall, or worse. Otherwise, you might find yourself again locked up and reminiscing about the good old days.

That Funeral

I felt uncomfortable at my cousins funerals. It was a big shock to me being at the funeral with four different caskets, especially the real little one. I just had one of those uncomfortable gut feelings. It felt like their spirits was roaming around at the church.

I felt uncomfortable seeing everybody crying, sharing tears of hurt and disbelief over their deaths. Another thing had me feeling uncomfortable was seeing them buried, knowing that I would never see them again until it would be my time to go.

-Ebony GU

From The Beat: It is hard for us to understand what happened from reading your piece — although it is not hard to understand the pain you felt at this funeral. What we don't understand is how four people all went at the same time. Was this the result of an accident, a crime, what? Your piece reminds us all of how good it is to be alive.

Living On My Own

What it do Beat? This that vato Cartoon from San Francisco. A lot of folks be talking 'bout I be on the block every day, all day but once 12:00 a.m. hit, they bouncing. I be living on the block, literally. I would be juking all day, then rent a hotel. Wake up, buy some food, go post up in the barrio, que no. Anyway if you say you be on the block every day, are you really, or are you mentiendo?

Well, I'ma cut it short. One love.

-Cartoon B5

From The Beat: For someone as intelligent as you, the life you've described sounds truly boring — a repetitive motion machine that does little or nothing to stretch his mind, his experiences, his understanding, his world. Unless you think you already know everything there is to know that's important in this world, we think you're cheating yourself big time by not going to school, by not venturing outside the barrio into new venues that you don't know, by not exploring ideas outside those you already have, and generally by not allowing yourself to be exposed to a world bigger than the one you know. And come to think of it, you're also cheating us, because we can use all the intelligent minds we can find to try to solve some of the problems that plague our communities. Too bad.

Teachers Aren't Teaching

What up Beat? What it do? This Goofy once again still up in B5. Bueno saludos a todos en la torcida, va. (Greetings to all locked up.)

Well, I want to talk about these so-called teacher's aid. I don't really think they want to help us because I heard a teacher say to a staff that we won't make it in the outs. The way I see it the teachers just come to get paid.

Well times up. Until next time, keep your head up and keep trucha. Al rato.

-Goofy B5

From The Beat: Are all the teachers like this, Goofy, or are some of them truly dedicated to your education? What do you wish you were learning that the teachers are not teaching you?

Funerals

The day my friend passed away it was a cold day. Life was taken. It was his. When I found out it gave me a great pain. Tears fell on my face. My best friend was dead...

You know you were like a brother to me Bernardo, my closest friend. Rest in peace, homie. You know you looking from the sky and watching me, giving me strength to go on. Peace out, man. I love you. RIP Sharkey.

-Antonio B5

From The Beat: This topic has given us many, many tragic pieces about the untimely death of young men. We hope that Bernardo is watching over you and keeping you safe from harm. What are you doing to keep yourself safe?

Uncomfortable

When I feel uncomfortable around somebody, it'll show all over my face and my movements. I'm extremely quiet. I only get uncomfortable when a person gives me bad vibes. When somebody talks about killing or doing anything that involves me coming in contact with the police, I get bad vibes and that will be my cue to leave.

-Sophia GU

From The Beat: If you are uncomfortable when people talk about things that could lead you here, and you take that as your opportunity to walk away, then these "vibes" are a good protective shield to keep you from getting in trouble. Unfortunately, though, it appears you don't always listen to your cue to walk away... 'cause you're here!

I Would Call My Mom

If I had anybody's phone I would have to call my mom. The reason I say my mom is because we're like best friends and I love my mom with all my heart. Sometimes she might be trying to yell at me and do too much, but I know she always going to be there for me and she only does what she do 'cause of the fact that I her only girl, youngest child, and she loves me.

-Jacqueela GU

From The Beat: We hope you know what a great gift it is to have a mother that you are so close to and who supports you so thoroughly. So, do you feel you let her down by coming in here? What do you think she wants most for you and from you? Can you deliver?

Freestyle

Put me on stage and let me freestyle Friday But I'm impatient

So until then I'ma freestyle While I wait

Girls like my way

How I profile on the highway

You could see my crow from a mile away

-Young Money B5

From The Beat: You're already on a stage. And, with so many eyes on you, maybe it would be wise to pull your head down a little. In certain professions, visibility is not an asset...

Funerals

I been to a lot of funerals. The most recent funeral I went to was Sky's funeral. He got shot on November 22, 2005.

When I went to his funeral I was extremely sad. I couldn't even stay for the whole funeral. It was sad to see his family go through that. It hurts the most to find out the reason they had shot him.

-Princess GU

From The Beat: It is tragic that your friend was shot and killed — whatever the reasons someone used to justify this crime. The date of Sky's funeral will always be remembered as the same date that President John Kennedy was murdered in 1963. What does going to so many funerals do to your thinking? Did any of them make you reflect on your own life and the risks you take out there on the streets?

Uncomfortable

Uncomfortable makes me feel uneasy Uncomfortable, the place I don't wanna be

It ain't how I've been raised Or what I've seen and done

It ain't who I'm with or who I meet

It's the situation I'm in that

Pushed me off my feet

I'm solo bolo 'cause it's better that way

Can't nobody make me stay

I'm solo bolo and that's how it's gon be

'Cause trustin' wrong people is uncomfortable

That just ain't me.

-Li'l Ma GU

From The Beat: This is a good poem Li'l Ma. You talk about the discomfort of trusting the wrong people. But how do you know they are the wrong people to trust without first trusting them? Are there any people in your life who you feel comfortable trusting?

A Funny Little Story

Wussup, guys? You know what's funny? My mom just came and told me that right when she got out of the car, she locked herself out 'cause she took her key out and put it in her purse. So she thought there's no point on bringing it to visit me, so she locked it in her trunk.

I was laughing at her the whole visit, but something I did bad also became good because I made a copy of her key 'cause I stole her car before. So I told her to go home and get my key so she doesn't have to go find a person with Triple A. I hid it so I had to tell her where to find it.

-Jason

From The Beat: This is very interesting. How did your mother react when she learned that you had a secret copy of the key to her car? She must have been torn between disappointment and joy for not having to call AAA. Did she laugh with you?

Uncomfortable In Jail More Than Once

Man, I feel uncomfortable every time I come to jail, and I feel this way because I hate being around punks all day. I just hate the jail lifestyle altogether.

-Vinny B5

From The Beat: Well, you can't hate the jail lifestyle all that much, Vinny, or would wouldn't be starting a piece that talks about "every time I come to jail." Unless you are one of those poor people who are afflicted with conditions like fetal alcohol syndrome and can't remember what they've learned from one day to the next, then we are forced to conclude that you're more comfortable in jail than you care to admit.

If I Had A Phone Number

If I had my boyfriend Jay's number, I would feel much better just to hear his voice, just to know that he's okay, or maybe just to tell him how much I miss him. He makes my time harder on me because he became the other part of me. I know how special he is and I promise you I won't come back to this place. I'll take my life more seriously and look at my life at a different angle. I'll do anything to keep us going in a real way on a real level.

Damn, I sit in my box thinking about you day and night. It makes my mind confused 'cause you're not around. The only time I see you is when I play outside on the court.

Until pen and paper meet see you soon.

-Gia GU

From The Beat: It's apparent from this piece that both of you are locked up, which is not the idea basis for a relationship! So, while we appreciate how much you care for him, we wish you'd think just as hard about what you must do if you want to remain free, since no relationship in slavery is worth having! Thinking about him is fine, but think of what the two of you need to do for each other, and what each of you has to do for her or himself. If he were not in the picture at all, what is the best course for you to follow for our own bright future?

Who I Would Call

If I had anybody's phone number I would call my boo Jeff. Man, I wish I had his number so I can cupcake with him. Anyways the other person I miss is JT. I miss him da most. Me and him been messin' with each other for 10 months Now dat's my boo he come before anybody.

-Lil' Shorty GU

From The Beat: Wow, if you could call anyone anywhere, from kings to presidents, from CEOs to millionaires, from movie stars to top athletes, you'd call your boyfriend to cupcake! We think you lack a certain curiosity about the world, and certain willingness to spread your wings a little wider than you're used to and try to experience something new. As long as your so focused on the old ways, you aren't using this time to prepare for your future.

If I Had You Here

If I had you here by my side, D
So I can see through yo' sexy eyes
And hold you tight in my arms
Damn, I wish I can talk to you
And I'm feeling you
Hardly even know you
But I would love to

Every time I see you it makes me smile
'Cause I know you lookin' after me
Boy, look, all I can say to you is to wait till I get out
So I can call you or you can call me
And maybe we can heat it up and get it poppin'

-Jessica GU

From The Beat: Too much heat and you'll find yourself right back here, on ice... What else are you thinking about besides D's sexy eyes? Don't you think it would be a good idea to make some real plans for your future, plans that include school and staying off the street so you can stay out of here? We don't want to see you back in jail Jessica, so we hope you are developing a master plan, for the old saying is true: "Those who fail to plan, plan to fail..."

Yes Sir

I'm here in YGC, yes sir
I need to get out yes, sir
I need to get the hell out, yes sir
This place ain't for me, yes sir
Can I please leave, yes sir
I don't want to go to a group home, yes sir
'Cause I want to go home, yes sir
Just to be with my mom, yes sir
I hate bein' in this screwed up system, yes sir
'Cause they play you, yes sir

So when I get out I'm goin' to be the happiest person, yes sir
So I can be with my boo, yes sir

Well I'm out see y'all whenever good bye Love Jessica

-Jessica GU

From The Beat: We know you want to get out and be free of the system. But we don't see in this piece the kind of thinking and planning you'll need to do if you want to stay free. The system that you say plays you can only do that if you do the things that give the system power over your life. If they are playing you, it's because you're inviting them to! You need a long-term plan for success. Do you have one? If not, we suggest that you start thinking about it.

If I Had Someone's Number

If I had someone's number, it'd be my boyfriend's, and I would most likely call him. I would tell him that I love him, that he means the world to me, and that I can't live without him. I would tell him that he's the only one that's keeping a smile on my face every morning.

He's the reason why I'm keeping my head up, and he's the reason that I don't never wanna mess up and end up here again.

He's the only somebody I'd ever call.

-Baby Cakes GU

From The Beat: Even though we understand the common expression, "I can't live without him," we feel pretty confident that you can live without him. (You did it all those years before meeting him, didn't you?) If he's the only reason you never want to mess up again, does that mean if he cheated on you then you'd do something to put yourself back in the box? That wouldn't be too smart, and you are smart, so that's not likely to happen either. It's nice to have a boyfriend, but it's even nicer to love yourself enough never to put yourself in jail again, regardless of who you leave behind when you do...

Making Myself Cry At Funerals

It affected me by looking at my little cousin in a casket. I have been to about 15 funerals out of my whole life, and only five of them were not family, but the rest was.

Yeah, I'm so used to being there at funerals that I don't even think I can start to cry. I just look at pictures before I cry so when I go in there I would cry. I just forget about them being dead. I just think about them being in a better place.

-Lashawnda GU

From The Beat: It is hard for us to imagine having to go to so many funerals, especially so many of family members! What do you think we can do to reduce the level of violence that is like a deadly disease in our communities? What are you doing to avoid such violence in your own life? What are you doing to avoid coming here again?

Never Been To A Funeral

I have never been to a funeral. That means I don't really know how it feels, but it must feel very sad and heartbroken to see a family member/friend laying in peace and have already left this earth. It must be sad.

-Baby Cakes GU

From The Beat: If you read some of the responses to this question, you will see just how heart breaking it is to go to a loved one's funeral. We hope you don't have this sad experience for a long, long time.

How I Feel

I feel like hurting
I feel like damaging
I feel like obliterating
I feel like destroying

I feel mad
I feel angry
I feel upset
I feel sad

I feel I'm being discriminated against
I feel others aren't being treated the same way I'm being treated

I feel I am being seen different than others

I feel a staff is prejudice against my race
I feel disrespected

I feel whenever you go up someone always try to pull you back down

I feel it's coo 'cause Cito gonna do whatever he wanna do anyway Cito out

-Cito B4

From The Beat: So, what does Cito want to do? We're sorry you're having all these negative feelings, especially if staff is discriminating against you. But the old saying, "This too shall pass," is true. Keep focused on the goal of getting out and staying out, and then you won't have to put up with any of it ever again.

Who's Cheating Who?

I feel uncomfortable 'cause I'm in here while my man is out not knowing what he is doing. I pray to God he don't cheat or any thing stupid 'cause if I find out he did anything with females, he knows they would get the ass whoopen.

-Inocente GU

From The Beat: So the end of your story begins where you are now: back in jail. On assault charges. If he's fooling around, than he's not worth it. But then again, you let yourself be taken from him by giving the police power over your life, so in a way, you've already cheated him! One of the realities about going to jail is that you lose all control over what happens on the outs. It just goes with the territory!

... I PROMISE
YOU I WON'T
COME BACK TO
THIS PLACE.

Hating To Be Dependent

I feel uncomfortable when I have to depend on someone else to do something for me. But even though there's some people I know I can depend on, I just hate having to wait. I'm what you call a very impatient person, and I try to be very independent.

-Jacqueela GU

From The Beat: It must be very difficult then, for you to be in jail right now, where you have to depend on others to do anything and everything. No one who is locked up can be independent...

Talk About Things

If I had anybody's phone number, Cito would call my cousin, Tony (aka Big Tone). Why? 'Cause I need to talk to him about some things that are going on in my life.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: Well, whatever you have to talk to Tony about, we hope it's nothing that can get you into trouble... How old is Tony?

The Whole Nine

Coach when the team down
and need to shine
put me in, in crunch time

I got punch lines,
bet I could get signed
ever since the first line
I had I had on my waist in
let them try to take mine
he gone take the whole nine

-Young Money B5

From The Beat: When you turn your formidable skills to your own education, to preparing for a future job, to finding a way to live in freedom and in health, we will be a lot more impressed. As it is, you are impressive enough, and we believe you could truly be signed — if only you manage not to get signed by law first...

Next Time

If I had anybody phone number, I would call Lil' Wayne and talk business since we both at the same level far as this rap game. Then set up a date to hit the booth together. Then after all that, we gone talk about Trina.

-Vinny B5

From The Beat: What level of the rap game are you and Wayne at? Why don't you try an experiment — see how long you can stay out of jail so that you can pursue your rap ambitions.

Funerals

The first thing that I thought about was that I'm surprised about the age rate—how young kids are.

-D-M B1

From The Beat: Why do you think kids are being killed at such young ages? Does seeing someone so young die influence your thinking about your own young life? If so, how? What advice can you give to minimize this ongoing tragedy?

I Would Call The President

If I had anybody's number, I would call the President. I would tell him to free me and I would ask if I could be one of his bodyguards so I could tackle anyone that comes near him. Just kidding.

Seriously, I would just call my parents and tell them I miss them and love them, or I'll just call one of my closest friend and talk to him forever! I miss him so much too. I just wish I could talk to him right now.

-Tiffany GU

From The Beat: We're glad you didn't waste that call on the President because he does not have the power to free you (unless you are a federal prisoner, which you are not). Still, we would love to know what you would say if you really did talk to the President. We'd also like to know about your best friend. What makes him that? What's special about him? How long have the two of you been so close? If you were talking to him right now, what would the two of you be talking about?

Who Would I Call?

I will call my girlfriend and tell her how sorry I am that I'm not with her. When I get out I'll tell her how I'm not coming back, and how I miss her good cooking and playing with her long hair and looking in her pretty eyes and her smile.

-Kenyon B2

From The Beat: Is there anyone else you would like to call besides your girlfriend? What about your mother or father? Grandparents?

Calling Heaven

If I can call somebody it will be heaven, so I could talk to my grandmother and see how she's doing and ask her how it is up there. I know she's up there. My grandmother was a good woman and she was nice to everyone and opened her kitchen to everyone. That's how kind-hearted she was.

-Dre B5

From The Beat: We're so sorry about the death of your grandmother, but we're very sure she knew just how much you loved her, and we're very sure she loved you very much. If she were here talking to you now, what would you expect her to tell you?

Funerals

Here I am livin' life at the age of 16 going on 17. Where I live, death comes on a daily basis to me in my 'hood. You hear gun shots almost every day and if not that, then the boys will come and harass you or people around you. They say they are helping you but I don't think so. Where they at when people is lighting off?

-Lil' Mika GU

From The Beat: How do you keep yourself out of the funk when things jump off in your 'hood? And even if you stay out of the funk, what are you doing (or planning to do) to stay out of the hall? If the boys who come and say they're helping aren't really helping, what is it they are doing?

The Last Funeral

The last funeral I went to was my ninja Gerrell's. Man it was crazy because it was sad because he is really gone. Now that he gone he gone be truly missed. I missed the times when I used to laugh at the funny things he use to say. I lost a part of him that can't be replaced. RIP Young Relly Poo

-Lil' Shorty GU

From The Beat: Funerals are always terribly sad for those who love the person who is gone. That's why we hate this long list of dead homies, because we know that so many mamas and friends like you are left crying. What do you think needs to happen so that the craziness can stop?

Most Uncomfortable In Jail

I'm most uncomfortable when I'm in jail because everything here is uncomfortable, like how you have to share underwear, and the mattresses is thin and hard, the bathrooms is dirty, five-minute showers, the rooms is too hot, the clothes is ugly, the food is nasty you don't know if you goin' home or not.

You gotta wait for a placement, we get three-minute phone calls, the deodorant is cheap, soap irritates your skin especially when you be up in here lookin' boocy. I hate the most that we don't have no privacy. Girls by messy. I don't like how we be in here missin' our families, bein' scared they gon put us in Colorado, getting mad at the staff, wantin' to curse them out but don't want to get room time.

I hate sittin' in my room thinkin' about what I would be doin' on the outs. It's uncomfortable and boring to me when all I could see is B4 and B2 when I look outside. I hate how just 'cause we in jail they think were bad. That's what's most uncomfortable to me. That's why YGC (you got caught) is not the place for me.

-Rhonda GU

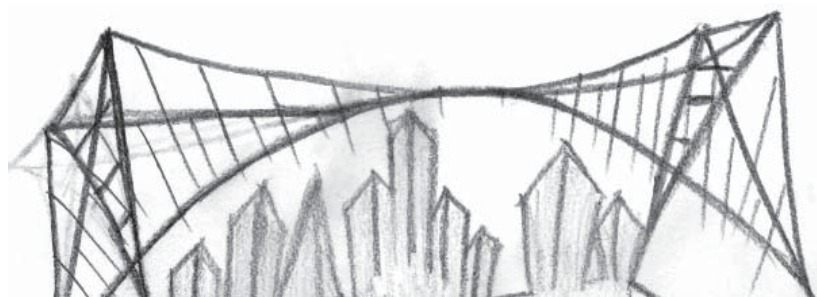
From The Beat: You're so right, Rhonda, YGC is definitely not the place for you. But the only way you can make sure you're not going to find yourself here again is if you don't give the system any reason to take you here. If YGC stands for "You Get Caught" then the only way to avoid it is not to do the things you get caught for! This place is designed to be uncomfortable, so that you never want to return. So, are you planning to come back? If not, what are you planning to do to make sure you don't?

I Don't Need Nobody's Number

I got everybody phone number I need, and when I get phone calls I call everybody I need. And for the beezies, when I call them, they get like three minutes each on the phone.

-Art Cash B4

From The Beat: So, you're given the opportunity to phone and speak with anyone, living or dead, anywhere in the world and at any time, and you choose three-minute calls with your beezies. This piece makes us sad. Do you have any curiosity about anything beyond the very tiny world you operate within?



Can't Stop Thinking About Him

If I had a phone number it would be my best friend Candice's. I would talk to her about everything that she's doing and would talk to her about Armando, who I now realize I really like. But I wouldn't call him, because I'm sure Candice could fill me in on stuff that he's going through, but he wouldn't be able to tell me about Candice.

I can't believe that I'm gonna be gone for this long. I hope that things between my friends and I aren't gonna be weird. I can't wait to see them all again and be with Armando and thizz and smoke bomb. These 30 days need to go faster 'cause I want to go home now. I wonder what Armando's going to tell me when I come home. I wonder, if he's really going to have molly's waiting for me. I hope he does I wonder if he going to have a car or even an apartment and another job or anything. I hope that he's really successful and got what he wants.

Dang I really like that boy. I wish I didn't so much. So yeah, pretty much I can't stop thinking about Armando. It's all I do any more. That's what makes it harder for me to stay here knowing that I'm not going to hold his hand or smell him or touch his soft hair or see his beautiful eyes for a month. I guess thinking about that makes me wanna go home.

-McKenna

From The Beat: So you're in a drug program thinking about you can't wait to thizz and smoke bomb! You hope these 30 days go fast so you can get out, and we hope they go slow enough so that you begin to learn some things about what the choices you've made mean for your future, for your health, for you own potential children! It seems like all your attention is on Armando and none is on yourself and what you need to do to stay free. So let's keep it as real as we can: If you get out in 30 days only to run back to Armando and drink and thizz and weed, you will find yourself even more alone doing even longer time and writing even sadder pieces about missing those you love. In short, start loving yourself and the rest will follow naturally!

I'm a young mother, soon to be 18 in a few days.

Why Me?

Well, it's been along time since I wrote to The Beat, but today I felt like writing. Well, I kind of needed to...

My title is "Why Me?" because right now that's how I feel. Throughout my past it's been pretty messed up. Up until a few weeks ago did I start to think things were gonna be okay.

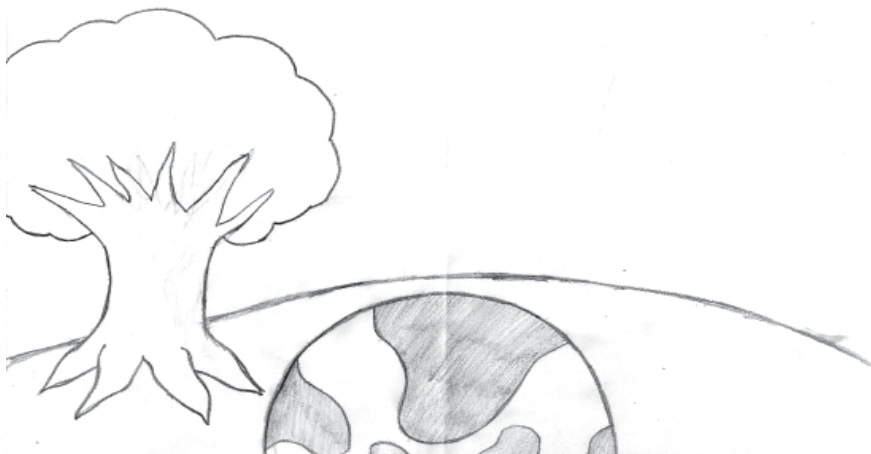
I'm a young mother, soon to be 18 in a few days. I love my daughter to death. She actually is my motivation to do good in this program that I struggle with. Recently I had received some bad news and left this program. And I did something that I regret so much — I returned to the program because I know it was the right thing to do.

Before I get to the end of this piece, please let it be known when I became pregnant I was disowned from my family and it took a long time getting acceptance from my family. Everyone told me from the jump to get a abortion, but I couldn't kill something I helped create.

So now today, three weeks after I left the program, I find myself pregnant again and I'm steady asking myself why me/ confused and not knowing what to do.

-LaLa

From The Beat: Of course we can't tell you what to do, LaLa, except that we hope you seriously consider every potential choice you have. We're sorry to say this, but you haven't shown yourself to be very responsible — which is something that every good mother must be. If you allowed yourself to get pregnant again, even while you're not able to care for your first beloved daughter, then how can you be asking yourself why? You know why. If you're going to be sexually active, then it is your responsibility to protect yourself against STDs (including HIV), as well as against getting pregnant, unless having a baby is part of your plan. Once you have passed this crisis, we hope you think long and hard about the decisions you are making — and the decisions you are not making — and decide what you want out of life, and how to get there from here. You have a child. It's time to start thinking like an adult.



Ben

If I could have one phone number in this rehab it would be my homeboy's, Ben. That's one of my best homeboys. But if I called him, I think things would be all bad. I would probably tell him to come pick me up from over here. But like I said he's one of my best homeboys and he wouldn't come get me because he wouldn't want me to mess my life up 'cause all I got is one more chance.

-Miss Payasa

From The Beat: Ben sounds like a true friend, the kind that doesn't lead a friend into danger. If he wouldn't want you to mess your life up, then we hope you don't want to mess it up, either. Why do you have only one more chance?

Creepier

About six months ago I went to my Homeboy Creeper's funeral. He was shot in a drive by. It was my first an' last funeral that I been to. My homeboy Creeper will always be in my thoughts and will forever be a part of me.

-Miss Payasa

From The Beat: There are far too many stories like this, Miss Payasa. Why do you think so many of your age are dying so young? Does Creeper's death make you want to do anything differently when you get out of here?

Calling My Man

I'll call my man Wolfy because he is locked up when I got locked up. I hell miss him so much I haven't seen him. I miss him, love him and that I really need him here with me. I'll call my sister, Baby D, and let her know I love her too, and I'll be home soon once I recover for drugs.

Anyways I'll let her know that she always on my mind and that I'm doing this for her and my dad.

-Smokey

From The Beat: Yes, it's hard to be separated from the ones we love, so think carefully when you get out of here about the choices you make, and how you will respond to the temptations that will surely come your way. Good for you to want to make your sister and dad proud of you. But we think there's one person to get clean and sober for that is even more important than they are: You! Do this for yourself!

No Funerals For Me

So I have had homeboys die before, but I don't do funerals. I remember this one homeboy that died. He got chopped up and put in an ice chest. I was so sad about him for so long.

-Merrily

From The Beat: Premature death is always sad, Merrily. We don't want to encourage you to attend a funeral, because they can leave you crying for a very long time.

Would You . . . ?

Would you still be there through the rough times
An' the pain, the friendship in my mind
Stuck to the game

Would you still be there if I got locked up for murder
Would you have my back or would you scat...
Or would you mess with my friend behind my back
If the relationship was going bad

Would you raise your hand or leave me sad
Or have me ready to grab the .45 or do some stupid shhh
Or a ninja that wouldn't last not telling my peeps
'Cause I'm already known that they mind is stuck to the streets
And in the 'hood we call the beast
So if I was you I'll take a seat
An' pay attention to the dime piece
The person that put yo' name in the streets
And it ain't no other chick like me.

-Nuke

From The Beat: When we read this, we wonder if you're still stuck to the game. It appears you're writing to a man who's on your mind. And while we can understand why that is on your mind, we hope you spend some of your time thinking only about you, and about what you need to do so that in the future you're not writing about some man that, because of your own choices, is separated from you.

From The Beat: It's a new season, so that means things are changing. The weather, the kinds of people we see around the office, and even the editorial-note writing contest. We've stopped accepting submissions for our 15th editorial-note writing contest so we're going to start running some of the submissions we received for a couple of weeks, so we can start reading them thoroughly and voting on the winners. The following three pieces are submissions. Remember the first-place writer will receive a one-hundred dollar money order. Second place receives fifty-dollars, and third and fourth place will receive twenty-five dollars each.

And if you forgot the topic, here it goes, "Turning Back The Hands Of Time." Tell us if you could turn back the hands of time would you? How far back would you go? What would you change? How would your life have turned out differently? Sure you could also tell us that you would not turn the hands back, but tell us why is that? Turning back the hands of time is a phrase we have heard time and time again, so tell us your take on it. Share your story, share your thoughts. If you had such power to rid the pains that have brought you to such a place would you turn the hands of time back?

Brace yourselves for some excellent writing...

Editor's Note

Writing Contest,

"Turning Back The Hands of Time"

STEPHON WILLIAMS

California State Prison in Corcoran, CA.

Turning Back The Hands Of Time

If... If I could turn back the hands of time, life for me would indeed be so much better. For one, I would not have been in the life of crime. Because I'd never have came to California. I was born in New Orleans, LA...but was raised in Baton Rouge, LA...this is where life all began for me. Life was so sweet, playing marbles and climbing trees, building tree houses... just plain being a kid. I remember the corner store having cookies going at 2 for a penny. Which was all that my family (mom's and grandmother) allowed me to buy. I had to earn my own spending money by doing other people's yards. You know picking up wall nuts and pecans as they fall from the trees. If you're from down south (Dirty South), you'll know what I mean when I say... there's nothing like a freshly baked pecan pie. Man my mouth is watering just from thinking about it.

But enough of that. The work was not hard at all, it showed me that it was well worth it, to work for the sweet taste of them cookies. I was not allowed to buy any form of candy, if I ask for some I was always told to go and get some sugar cubes from the kitchen. Now let's flash back on my 2 brothers. Gregory he's the oldest, he took me cat fishing once and he did not know that the fish (Catfish) is right by the banks. Because the catfish likes the mud. But I guess he was trying to show out for his baby brother (me). He was slanging his line trying to get to the middle of the lake that was behind the school "East Beaucannon Jr. Elementary." Well he tried to do as our uncle do? Slanging the line back and forwards. But on his last try, the line came too close to his face which caused the hook to catch the inside of his nose "Ouch." I tried not to laugh at him but I just could not help myself, so he took off running home without me... Man can you picture the look on my face?? I stayed there fishing, mind you, I'm scared of catfish. But I love to eat them, so there I am fishing...

The first one I caught, I did not know what to do with it. So I stood there holding this fish, I had to figure out a way to keep fishing? Then it hit me..."Butch, all you have to do is cut the line with the fish on it. Drop it in the bucket, tie another hook on the line and keep on fishing." I stayed there until I caught somewhere around 15 to 17 catfish. I then walked home, but I went my way, one that the family did not know about. But when I got home my mom's was pissed at me for not coming home with my big brother? I told her a lie, that I could not carry all of the fishing stuff and keep up with Greg which got him another whooping, the first one he got was for leaving me in the first place. But the good thing came out of the whole situation... we had catfish for dinner that night.

Now for my other brother, his name is "Gerald." At this time he was the troublemaker, so it was very easy for me

to get him spanked at will. Gerald is the type of brother everybody would love to have, if anyone was to pick on his baby brother (me) he would not hesitate to knock them down... I'm not saying that he won all of his fights, but you can believe he did this out of love for me. He would take me to stores with him and have me to wait out front while he went inside. He would come out about 5 minutes later with some toys under his coat. When we would get close to home, he would tell me not to show the items to mom's because we was not supposed to go to the stores, and we didn't have any money to buy the stuff. But just as soon as he would make me mad... there I go, right to mom's and tell on him... Whooping Time!

Now let me get to one summer of 1970. Mind you I was born in 1961. So at this point I'm only 9 years old. It was so hot and we had just moved into our first rented house. It was a nice big house; right across the street from us there was this BIG house. It had everything that a family could ever want in their backyard. A swing set, weights, pool, toys, and last, but not least... A big dog! Me and my brothers wanted to go swimming real bad. We was sweating just walking to school, mom's would leave for work before we were to leave to school. So this one-day on the way to school we decided to double back home. Gerald said that he was going swimming in the neighbor's pool. Well, let me tell you this... He jumped that big red fence fought with that dog... the dog bit him, he got his hands inside of the dog's mouth and he pulled the dog's jaw apart. My brother killed that dog, and me and my older brother Greg, joined Gerald in that pool. I tell you that we had a good day that day. But we all got a whooping about 3 days after that because we did not got to school for another 2 days. But you know good things don't always last...

The school called my mother, who told us to go outside and pick a switch off the tree. There was no such thing as using a belt, that would be giving you mercy. And my mom's nor my Grandmother believe in mercy whoopings. It's all about the switch! Our butts was sore for about a week. Those was the good days to me. Remembering all of the good times, brought tears to my eyes because these days we're not close at all. Everybody has seem to go off in different directions. But when my mother was still alive (she passed away in 1989 — may she rest in peace!) me and my brothers were so close.

So if I could turn back the hands of time, I would go back to my child hood days, playing marbles and fishing with my 2 brothers. I would change the move to California? Because being in Baton Rouge, LA. We had so much to do as kids. My life would've turned out so much differently for this simple fact, I would have been there when my grandmother passed away... I did not go to her funeral because my mom's did not have the money to send me back home, plus I think she somehow knew that I would not have came back if she sent me. But the best thing would've happened if I could turn back the hands of time... I would've never became a criminal!!

TERRY LYTLE

Marion Correctional Institution in Marion, North Carolina

Turning Back The Hands Of Time

I grew up around drugs and crime. I was born in Maricopa County, Phoenix, Arizona, at a place called Saint Josephs Hospital. It must be where I picked up my angel — or three! I write, because it helps with the emotional pain. But mostly, I write to myself: Poems, raps; I've even wrote lessons, on sermons (whichever you prefer) from the bible and Qur'an. I never, ever sent any writing to any type of publication. I tell you this, Beat Within writers, because on my clock, the writing has been my best tool

Yes, I'd like to turn back the punishing hands of time: I'd love to see what would have happened to me, if my mom and dad could have stayed together. To my family, divorce affects us all. I'd of liked to see my mom not so tired, from working for three mouths to feed and that doesn't even count hers. I'd probably have been less selfish and self-centered then I am, who knows? I would have like to made things easier for her then I did. Like when I was 11 and 12 years old working in a tobacco field, for \$2.00 an hour, when minimum wage was \$3.15. Well, I'd like to give her most of what I made, instead of half. Who knows maybe I wouldn't be so bitter about the "good ole days" exploiting my labor. And I'd probably be more understanding, on why, just because my mom made \$16.00 too much one month, the county welfare wouldn't help. I mean, if the hands of time we're turned back, somebody could explain to me why "they" even called it AFDC-aid to families with Dependent Children. See, being dirt poor didn't bother me — being looked down upon did.

I'd love to save my mom all her pain — I mean, what, with her older daughter nearly dying from a suicide attempt, her son in and out of trouble, and her baby girl catching all the anger from both — it's a wonder she didn't go crazy.

I would have never been shot at more than once with the hands of time turned back. I would also never have been in all those car wrecks either. I would probably never ended up in jail or prison so many times. I guess I wouldn't have waited 20 years either, to

CONTEST (CONT.)

fly back to Arizona, to be reunited with my dad. And I'm positive, I would not have an 8th grade teacher tell me "you'll be in prison before you're 18!!!!"

But...to turn those same hands of time back, I wouldn't have learned how to work a job to survive, to eat. Even with the boss being unfair. My mom is very strong; and to try and take her pain away and carry it myself — I would have harmed her doing that. Believe me, each struggle made her stronger. By my turning time back, would I survive the first shot? Would I have been hit, instead? And what about all those wrecks? I walked away from every one, before.

As for waiting 20 years to meet my dad (again) I believe it took that long, for me to mature enough, not to be angry and risk disrespecting him. After all, he's only a man, too and now my friend. And even though I'm in prison for the seventh time, I can't blame that 8th grade teacher. It's my fault, for not heeding the warning. She did try, with me.

Sure, I'd turn the hands of time back but I won't. Being hard-headed, my lessons were hard enough to learn. I'm a big kid, but a 30 year-old man. Besides, even if I could play God, and be the keeper of my time, I'd still miss the most High God's, grace! There's a song, by Garth Brooks (I know! Country music?! Yuk) Called The Dance. It has a line in it somewhere that goes: "I could have missed the pain; but I'd of had to miss... the...dance."

We all could miss the pain. But in order to have a Higher Power or even call on God in prayer, we have to trust his direction. I don't believe it's his will to allow time to punish us. I believe the lessons are the goal.

Out here, we have a saying — "you weren't arrested, you were rescued." And we are in school. There's no old school/new school-that's "politics." We are, all, where we are, to proceed down the path (or, up the path, if you prefer) to learn our lessons. To turn back the hands of time, life may have been better. But what would happen to my lessons? I couldn't have wrote this, without them.

FRANK SERRANO

Pelican Bay State Prison

Turning Back The Hands Of Time

In a marooned ship sailing on a restless ocean with only a dim light in sight shining from a distant lighthouse in a far away shore. The more I propel towards it, the further I get from reaching it. I'm anchored in the ebb and flow of time. Would I turn back the hands of time? It's a loaded question but the obvious answer would be that I would for some reasons more than others. Backwards to add to the good memories I carry now. Forward, beyond the near present, where I can take a sneak peak into the future just to see what awaits me.

I used to think of the past and say to myself, "If I knew then what I know now." I've made my fair share of mistakes, which I believed were right at that given moment. I paid my dues — some in harder ways than I would have liked but we must learn from it all. We grow wiser and gain an abundance of experience with time. It is best to learn from other people's mistakes and avoid making them myself. I'm still traveling the ocean surface but there's less turbulent waves now to prevent me from reaching a far off land.

Growing up I used to ignore advice and counsel that adults would offer because I thought under a false sense of pride and ignorance, that I was right and they were wrong about what was best — for me. I used to say that they forgot what it's like to be young and wouldn't consider the experience they had already accumulated. The outcome of my life would have probably been different if I had adhered to their guidance. That's not to say that I regret it and I wouldn't go turning the hands of time for that purpose in it because it's not as simple as going back and suddenly, I start living a straight and narrow path. There are a lot of factors to consider and I know now that life would still throw a curve ball and play its roll in the over all scheme of things. We each journey through life on all equal plain. Money; power; success; it makes no difference when we can't help but suffer losses, pain, heartache, and all those mortal set backs that we must endure in order to grow as unique individuals with our foibles and strengths.

Our lives are predetermined not by whom we are or what we are but there is an underlying cause stemming by our environment conditions, and inmate interpretation of what we choose to do with

what happens to us. Young minds are still like silly putty that can be fashioned and molded with ease by external influences or because of false and misleading information or misinformation. As youngsters, we are quickly impressed by negative acts and behaviors and our absorbing of it attaches itself in a more penetrating effect as we are drawn to dangerous play by nature. It is our way of feeling life in its purest form. It seems more attractive and interesting than moral goodness — which we judge to be boring and dull. Some have asked "Are we good people doing bad or are we bad trying to be good?"

I once read that aging is like building sand castles against a rising tide. We acquire knowledge, wisdom, power, respect, and integrity as we grow older but it is all in vain because inevitably, it must all come to an end? Would you still build that sand castle and regret when the tides come crashing down on it? Or would you build anew. Time waits for no one. With or without us it moves forward. There is much we would want to correct but the past is behind us. Going back may help you change them but upon your return, you'll find yourself with new ones and some may be worst than those previously erased. Our past is meant to be referred to as learned lessons to help us navigate through our present voyage. As an old adage say's, "You can't know where your going unless you know where you came from." Life is best lived in the here and now in spite of our fate where we are forced to live under oppressed circumstances to dwell on the past is to stop living, as it is, to worry about the future that has much to reveal.

Be thankful, no matter how difficult it may be at this instant, to be able to breathe the aura that is life and taste its sweet nectar through the joy of its many pleasures. There are those less fortunate — those not living- incapable of relishing al that life had to give. Would they want to turn the hands of time and change their outcome or would they rather sleep endlessly to elude life of its inauspicious misgivings? I bet the over all where just grateful to have lived because after all. He/she would change the hands of time, in either direction, would be doing so selfishly — to cure the many wounds that life has inflicted and time has no yet healed or to fill an empty void with significant and intangible substance.

Life is what we make of it and as long as we have a life to make anything of it, we should do our best to live as if we are given a second chance at doing what is right. Only then will we redeem ourselves of our past mistakes or unfinished business. Your future is determined by the present which one-day you'll reflect on as the past with no need to turn the hands of time. It's never too late. All we have is time.

NASIR DAVIS Writing from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA, Nasir writes a piece that offers a whole lot of hope. As he waits for an upcoming hearing before the parole board, he sends greetings to all of our readers. And this is a good person to receive greetings from. A powerful soul obviously dedicated to God, he writes about his belief that we all fall short sometimes and that the actual falling isn't what we need to worry about, it's whether or not we get back up again. We know first hand that it's hard to live a life that's righteous, so we respect Nasir for trying to do so. We will always accept you here Nasir, no need to excuse yourself for taking so long to write us back, even though we were getting kind of worried.

We All Fall Short

We all fall short of the glory of God (Jesus) and need God's grace and guidance daily, not only when we think we are strong enough to do it on our own. See, I'm a man and deal with this fleshly battle on a constant basis just like the next person, whether it be from my attitude, temper, lustful urges or just plain out not wanting to be bothered with no one or God. However, the difference between me and some is I do recognize my faults, shortcomings or sin and I get back up again and come to God with all my imperfections no matter what I've done, because He accepts me just the way I am. Plus, I'm covered by the blood of Jesus!

See, we all fall short of the glory of God, no matter who we are or who we become in life, whether it's a mass murderer

or multi-billionaire, ghetto mother or soccer mother, famous or not, famous but God still loves you the way you are, right where you are. See, we all fall short because none of us was or are like God's only Son Jesus Christ who was perfect in all ways and was no sin found in Him. He went to the cross alone and all his friends (disciples) who once followed Him left him hangin'. He was the sacrificial lamb for all of us and every sin we could ever possible commit and all we have to do is submit to Him and tell Him we no longer want to do it our way but His way. It's that simple y'all and He's waiting 24/7.

We all fall short of the glory of God, and no matter what we look for in life or put our energy into life, it cannot and will not satisfy you like the love of God and all He has in store for you once you give your life to Him. Please don't get me wrong. Once you give your life to God all your problems won't magically disappear and you won't suddenly be rich with material possessions. However, God will take care of you and supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus, if only you will allow Him to without no interference from your carnal mind.

So let go and let God do the rest. One love y'all. Keep your heads up and stay positive and for sure I will do the same. Please excuse me Beat Family, for staying away so long. Just been focusing more on my Heavenly Father. Gotta do what's right by Him!

the difference between me and some is I do recognize my faults, shortcomings or sin

ISRAEL PEREZ From the depths of the hole at Salinas Valley State Prison, Israel Perez describes why gangs appeal to so many young men desperate for security and acceptance (even love). But he goes farther than merely describing the circumstances that lead to gang affiliations; he urges all whose personal identity is bound up in group definitions to renounce their dependence on others and become their own persons, with all the risks that go along with such a decision. One gets the feeling, reading this somewhat detached prescription, that he's already applied this instruction to his own life, though this is one of those rare pieces (rare for Israel Perez, that is) that is not clearly rooted in his own, personal experience. But whether it is or not, the message is unambiguous: Be your own man or woman!

Les Croulants (The Crumbling Ones)

(Dedicated to all the men who are about to take their first independent step onto their own path, as well as those men who are contemplating such a step.)

If it's one thing I've learned during my long arduous trek through California's Prison System, it's that there's always a large group of male prisoners who are followers by nature. Creatures of wolf-pack mentality. Herd type animals whose greatest fear is of being caught standing alone on prison's many wide stretches of prairie land. And it's for this fear that causes them to behave in ways they normally would not otherwise.

Like all other prisoners, these men are weighed down with three fundamental needs: number one, to be secure, dependent on someone or something that can assure their safety; number two, to move forward, to master, to satiate their aggressions; number three, to interact comfortably and unitedly with other human beings to accomplish their desire to love and be loved.

But these prison followers are unlike any other prisoners in that their basic needs, thoughts, desires are unobtainable, inhibited and eventually twisted. More than likely, they will have suffered abandonment or rejection or even hate from a parental figure. As small kids, they will have sought out security and found none available. Thus, they grow into manhood seeking out someone to depend on. Yet, due to their dysfunctional childhoods, they cannot sublimate their hostilities. Finally, they are lost, and turn away from any forms of society's authority. However, still they are plagued by a longing for protective authority, not to mention their need for approval. So these masterless puppets turn to the authority of prison gangs, and subordinate themselves to the gang's all-encompassing power. And in these gangs, they lose themselves to the rigid rules and complex politics. For at

long last, they discover the parent with authority, blessings and granting approval they have never known before. They discover a totalitarian symbol on which they can depend, through which they can find release for their frustrated anger and hopelessness, from which they received that rewarding pat on the head — love.

These prisoners... Well, these prisoners are never content or happily amoral, these cliques of glory seekers, only lonely and adrift and weak and afraid, self-destructive in their criminal aberrations, perversions, careless givings and takings. Up close, these men are pathetic; they are tawdry; they are cheaply depraved, the petty criminals of normality and the frightened fugitives of life. For they cannot walk their own path, breathe an unguarded breath. These men can't even think or dream without being oppressed by their won obligations of accomplishing, competing, progressing to the next tier of fiendishness.

And with this fiendish progressing comes the tearing down, ripping up, demolishing of building blocks which once made them unique. Where the places they most loved to haunt in society turn black and white in their minds, as they shove them deep down, away, where their pre-prison memories become episodes to be ashamed of as they wrinkle and fray during the process of burying. These prisoners begin to gouge out deep trenches in their very hearts, in their very souls, where they then bulldoze in their childhood stories, for they fear signs of weakness are embroidered into the fabric. And then — there in the scorched barren landscapes — they sow the fertile twisted seeds, which were born of rotten twisted fruit, the bitter fruits of past prison generations. Fruits which cause them to snicker, giggle, merrily laugh at even the smallest of others' heartaches and pain. That causes them to seek out dark corners in which to lay in wait, to plot, to connive, to conspire with other creatures of the same fruit.

However, all is not lost for these wolfish men, for they needn't be forever tethered to their self-inflicted insecurities. For there is a true path to self-reliance, self-efficiency, self-consciousness — albeit the path is not always easily found. And even more difficult is taking that first step once the path is discovered. Because it will take bravery, strength, and unyielding will to move away, break off from the protectiveness of the herd. Yet, once the decision to walk one's own path is made, only then does the muddy water begin to clear. Only then can one look back and observe what state of blindness and confusion the wolf pack truly exists in. Only then. Yes, only then.

Dear The Beat Within

I'm hoping and praying, that when you receive this respectful letter of mines, that if it finds you all, in the best of health but most of all, in God's tender loving care.

Just these few lines, to say hello and praise the lord and to see, how are you all doing? Fine I hope, 'cause as for myself? I've been doing all right, praying, that you all at The Beat Within, have been doing the same as well.

First and foremost, my utmost respects are extended to you all at The Beat Within as always. With that said, I would like to say that I sent you some poems and asked if I could please get your subscription of The Beat Within when I was in the prison of Jamestown, CA and I never received anything from you all, not even a thank you and this was last year in Oct. 2005 or Nov. 2005.

Now with all due respect, I'm here at the Corcoran SHU and would like to get the subscription of The Beat Within, I will be sending you some more poems first chance I get. Do you all accept photos of people and stuff like that. Sorry that I can't give you any donations, It's 'cause I don't have no money as it is, it's hard for me to get an envelope so I can write you all. So if I take long to write, I'm sorry- please accept my apology. I don't mean no disrespect in any way at all.

Here's a poem I'm sending you all. It's called Knowledge, hoping you all at The Beat Within like it. This is going to be all for now.

Take care and God bless.

Subscribe me to The Beat Within, I will be waiting to get it. Thank you!!

DAVID ZAMORA

Writing from Corcoran's SHU, David challenges The Beat in

his letter to us because of our slow turn around as far as publishing. We understand one's frustration with creating thoughtful pieces only to have to sit and wonder if we're ever going to publish them. But believe us, if we had the capacity to publish things 'on time', we'd publish your writings as soon as we received them. However, because of limited resources we can't fulfill our own desire to want to learn from you and it frustrates us too. We appreciate your patience with us and hope our lack of timing doesn't discourage you from connecting with us. With that said, he concludes with a wonderful poem titled 'Knowledge' where he explains ignorance and wisdom in such a way that you forget he's talking about an idea that's present in our lives all the time. The best way we can describe it is free-flowing. So as this free publication flows through your mind understand that though this man is rightfully frustrated with us, he still has the time to express himself in ways that are beneficial to everyone. Thanks for teaching and hopefully this time we were a little faster. If not, you know what to do — let us know.

Knowledge

Sapu, rust grows from iron and destroys it. So evil grows from the mind of a warrior and destroys him. A scripture or a letter that is not read with sincerity soon becomes covered with dust. A house that is not fixed, when it needs repairing becomes filthy. So an idle man soon becomes defiled, impure acts defile a person.

Stinginess defiles an offering. So evil acts, not only defile this life, but also the following lives. But the defilement to be most dreaded is the defilement of ignorance. A warrior cannot hope to purify either his body or mind until ignorance is removed. It is easy to slip into shamelessness, to be pert and bold like the Brown Eagle, to hurt others without any feeling of regret for such action. It is hard indeed to feel humble and to know respect and honor, to get rid off all attachments, to keep pure in thought and deed and to become wise.

It is easy to point out all the mistakes of others, while it is hard to admit ones own mistakes. A man broadcasts the sins of others without thinking. But he hides his own sins, as a gambler hides his extra dice.

Sincerely,

DANIEL ROWE

A typical day at school is taken for granted by the younger generation. Most kids nowadays would rather not be in school and here you have someone writing screenplays about a typical day in school.

We need more 'educational addicts' out there in the world. And this screenplay says why without actually saying why. In school you're interests and desires could be exercised to a point where they can really make you a good living down the line. That's not to say that if you go to school, you'll be promised a good job and everything will be alright because we know many people who've finished college and are still looking for work. However, it is to say that if you have a degree, your chances of getting paid to do what you want to do is much higher. Daniel knows this and hopefully you all will too. Daniel's writing from California State Prison in Corcoran, CA.

Educational Addict

Hello everyone, I know it's been a while since I've got at you all. But I've been busy writing my movies and songs and other things. Trying to do something with my life but I wrote a little screen write for you all for The Beat.

Scene One:

Location: Interior, Los Angeles, California. L.A. Trade Tech College. Verdell sits in class while the teacher serves a lesson explaining.

Teacher:

Today we are beginning our first assignment in music. Music is a powerful area and many have made big careers out of it and are very famous and loved and respected by many. So our lessons will be very helpful to some.

Verdell:

Excuse me Miss, my goal is music. I write songs and produce musical beats. Will we be learning how to write musical notes?

Teacher:

Yes sir, you will. Now everyone open up your textbook please to the first page. We're going to read through a little bit.

A few students read a while out loud. Taking turns up to a few chapters. Students took notes, they talked about what they read.

Class ends for the day in music.

Scene 2:

Location: Interior, Los Angeles, California. In business class at Trade Tech college.

Teacher:

Good day class.

Class:

Good day Mr. Wright.

Teacher:

Main thing in business is choosing what you really want to do. And stick with it. Focus on that area and never give up until you have reached that mark. So Verdell, let's start with you. Where do you see the educational skills taking you in the future?

Verdell:

I am planning on starting a business in fashion designing, songwriting, film writing and music producing.

Teacher:

That's brains. Those are good areas of work. Good blessings on that. Anyone else want to share their future?

A brownish hair Mexican woman name Martha speaks out.

Martha:

I wouldn't mind sharing. I want to start my own law firm that represents prisoners, real estate business.

Teacher:

Nice to see some talent and plans to do something with them. Talent should not be wasted. Okay class is over for the day. For home assignment read and study chapter 1 pages 4-22 in the globalization and business book. We will be acted on that tomorrow in class. Have a good one everyone.

School is out for the day, and everybody part ways.

LIL' MAN Writing from the SHU in Pelican Bay State Prison, which is located in Crescent City, CA, Lil' Man hits us with a letter and a knock out poem personifying heroin as a woman. Seductive, appealing, and satisfying, heroin does whatever it can to try and break the writer. It flirts with him, tells him sweet nothings, and even makes promises for the future as it attempts to be loved by him so he can destroy his own life. And with the last line, 'till death do us part', we can only try to put ourselves in the shoes of someone using heroin and it doesn't seem like it would make for a pretty sight. Hopefully, this poem will change your mind if you're thinking about using it. Thanks Lil' Man...

You'll need lots of money (as you have been told)

For darling, I'm much more expensive than gold.

You'll swindle your mother and just for a buck,

You'll turn into something vile and corrupt.

Beat!

Hello everyone it's me Von Clutt's from the SHU. At The Bay, sorry I have not been writing to you guys my life been so crazy now, my girlfriend is back into my life now. I have been writing her and my step kids. I'm getting out in two more years that's a good thing for me.

Doing time it's played out. It's not like it was before in the 90's — fun. As you get older, you stop and think about life, and I got something going for me now, I can't wait for my ol' lady to be my wife. Soon when I get out...give everyone at The Beat my respects for doing a good job. Life is good when you got someone on your side, and your family to love.

Take care...
Your friend,

Chances are we will rise above this pain in our hearts
Keep our heads up and look to the stars

BANDIT Most of the people we know have friends or family members that have passed away. Sometimes by natural causes, most of the time by unnatural causes like murder. Whatever the case, it's sad to know that young people nowadays are getting killed left and right. And the only solution we have for that is to keep on killing. You kill my folks, now I'm going to kill yours. And the other side will think the same thing when you decide to go through with it, so it becomes a never-ending cycle of who can kill who first — very sad. Half of the time the people dying are really good people on the inside. They say the good die young and maybe that's true, but what we know for certain is that the wise die old. Hopefully, we'll find ways to keep ourselves out of situations that may cause this kind of outcome. Otherwise, we'll leave good friends behind like Bandit, who's writing from Preston Youth Correctional Facility in Lone, CA. That's a Y-A institution. Good tribute to your friend, we're sure he's appreciating it wherever he is.

A Homie Doin' Life

These precious moments that fly on by
Are times to dream and times to cry
Being locked up has given us time to dream
That one day soon we'll break our links
Then we will go home free with no chains
The weight of the world will be lifted off our shoulders
With no more pains
I often wonder where we will end up
Feet side by side with our face up
Will we become someone relentless
Chances are we will rise above this pain in our hearts
Keep our heads up and look to the stars
Will we win our battles tattooed with scars
Or will I end up with life behind bars

Miss Heroin

Hello, I'm back! Been away for a while.
It's going to feel good to be in your arms again.
I told you that nothing else could please you like I can.
So now Little Man,
You've grown tired of crack, cocaine, L-S-D, acid and hash.
Someone pretending to be your true friend
Is going to reunite you with me "Miss-Heroin!!"
Well honey, before you start fooling with me
Just let me inform you of how it will be.
For I will seduce you make you my slave.
I've sent men much stronger than you to their graves.
So you thought you could never become a disgrace,
And end up addicted to poppy seed waste.
So you'll start inhaling me one afternoon,
You'll take me into your arms very soon.
And once I have entered deep in your veins,
The craving will nearly drive you insane.
You'll need lots of money (as you have been told)
For darling, I'm much more expensive than gold.
You'll swindle your mother and just for a buck,
You'll turn into something vile and corrupt.
You'll mug and you'll steal for my narcotic charm,
And feel contentment when I'm in your arms.
The day when you realize the monster you've grown,
You'll solemnly promise to leave me alone.
If you think that you've got the mystical knack,
Then sweetie, just try getting me off your back.
The vomit, the cramps, your gut tied in a knot,
The jangling nerves screaming for just one more shot.
My little white grains
Can only save the hot chills, the cold sweat, and the withdrawal
pains. There's no other way, and there's no need to look,
For deep down inside, you will know you are hooked.
You'll desperately run to the pusher and then,
You'll welcome me back into your arms once again
And when you return (just as I foretold).
I know that you'll give me your body and soul.
You'll give up your morals, your conscience, your heart,
And you will be mine until "Death Do Us Part."

Just let it be known I will always and forever be prayin' for
you homie
Who will never make it back to your home in San Jose
Cali(fornia)
Life without parole is what you was told
To live in a cage so dark and so cold
Erupted with emotions as the pain kicks in
Knowing there's no going home ever again
But that's how we end up raised with chains and a celly
You'll always have love comin' from this homie posted in
Salinas Valley
I know it must hurt somewhere deep down inside
But a homeboy like you has way too much pride
Your probably stressing out 'cause you'll neva lay in yo'
own bed
And all the food that you eat is all state fed
But don't trip homeboy 'cause I'll always have your back
Reminiscing of good times posted in CYA makin' it crack
Two down soldados reppin' our hood
But now split up one doing years the other for good
I hope one day that you make it out
So we could sit back and chill blaze and smile
Talk about our missions that the judge sent us on,
Sippin' on 40's bumpin' oldie songs
But back to reality we know it won't happen
God chose our destination before we were smashin'
So do me a favor and keep your head up
And never let your chin hit your chest
You'll always be in my prayers
I love you carnal from one G to the next...

Who I Am

I know the first thing that comes to mind after hearing my name is "PLAYER" but that's not me. Life is too short for games and I don't play with love cause I don't want love playing with me. I'm just a guy with a little bit of soul a whole lot of heart, and flare for words, that's looking for that one girl to give my heart to.

I'm the "Good Man" that every girl thinks is a b. I'll rub my girl's feet after a hard day and really listen and care about what she's saying. I'm the type to buy her flowers just because it's Monday. Now I'm a prince of hearts but one day I'll find that one girl and become a king. Then make her the queen of mine.

THE PRINCE OF HEARTS

Watch
out Rico

Suave, we have a smooth talker of our own. Going by the name 'Prince Of Hearts', this writer explains how his name gives him the wrong image and he really is looking for that one — whoever that may be. He goes on to give a lustful shot out to 'the lovely ladies here at The Beat Within'. Well, with all due respect your highness, the lovely ladies here are working very hard to help us put this publication together and it wouldn't be right for us to exploit our relationships with them and start a dating service. And we'd appreciate it if you didn't either. We understand that jail can make a man frustrated by not having enough contact with a woman, but we also understand that we cherish The Beat and what it really was created for so much that we wouldn't put it in jeopardy for the lust of man. As far as the actual writing goes, this young man definitely has a gift. He sends us his poems from N.A. Chaderjian, one of Y-A's institutions in Stockton, CA. Hopefully, he'll keep us updated on how his search is going and in the meantime we'll pass this around the office and see what the ladies think — ha, ha got cha', we're just kidding.

You Are... I Am

You are force, I am form, together we make motion
You are night, I am day together we make time.
You are hot, I am cold, together we make warmth.
You are emotion, I am logic, together we make decisions.
You are female, I am male, together we make love.

You are the moon, I am the sun, we share the earth.
You are the dusk, I am the dawn, we share the twilight
You are the pine, I am the oak, we share the forest
You are the mind, I am the spirit, we share the body.
You are the woman, I am the man, we share our lives.

You are the harp and drum, I am the horn and flute,
Needed to have music
You are the winter and fall, I am the spring and summer,
Needed to have seasons.
You are North and West, I am East and South,
Needed to have direction.
You are earth and water, I am air and fire,
Needed to have elements.
You are the mother and daughter, I am the father and son,
Needed to have a family.

If we HAVE love, then we SHARE and MAKE each other complete.

My Perfect Girl

I like them small, medium, or red bone
She can be any color it don't matter her skin tone
I like all kinds ain't nobody excluded
Unless her minds messed up and her souls polluted
She gotta be fly, but she can't be a duck
Cause I leave the lights on every time we @\$\$%
I don't deal with hoes, so she gotta be classy
I love some attitude, so she gotta be sassy
She has to have a body in that coke bottle style
And even though she's a lady she's still ghetto wild
She can get a new braid whatever it's called
She can even cut it short, but she can't be bald
Beauty no brains always gets on my nerves
She gotta have intelligence to go with the curves
She has to want a man that will treat her right
That would rather be with her than his boys at night
I'll never leave this girl, I'm on her hip like a purse
I'm dedicated to her for better or worse
What I'm speaking is real without a doubt
I got the kind of love Mariah sings about
8.3.1 girl I'm not scheming
I love you. 8 letters, 3 words, I meaning
But I couldn't find this girl in this wide world of sin
So now I pour out my soul to the lovely ladies of the
Beat Within

my life so far away from you is empty of all substance
and my existence on this lonely planet is two-dimensional at best.

LIL' ROBERT

It must be hella weak being away from the ones you love most. And we know that it takes a very strong person to survive without having too much contact with those who genuinely care about you. Lil' Robert, who's writing us from Santa Rita (Alameda County Jail) writes about missing who we're assuming is his girlfriend. A lot of us can relate to this, especially if we've been locked before. What we trip on is why for some the pain of being away from your loved ones isn't enough to keep you out of jail. Well, we'll keep trying to figure that out. In the meantime, read on and witness the bleeding heart of this incredible poet.

Dearest Chola

How can I express the longing I have to be with you? Words are very hard to find. It is as though I am a compass needle, and you are the North Pole. Constantly, my thoughts are drawn to you, my love, for your influence on me is absolute.

Cholla, my life so far away from you is empty of all substance and my existence on this lonely planet is two-dimensional at best. I anxiously count the days until we, at last, will be together again to share the divine love that God has created between us.

Until that day is a reality I remain your true love,

One Lonely Day

One lonely day has all but passed
Since last I held you in my arms
And truly did I think I'd last
At least a day without your charms

Hard work, I thought will keep me sane;
Block you out and dull the pain;
And easily I will contain
A love from which I must abstain

But all day long my thoughts do shout
Your name without a moments rest
In truth I cannot block you out
For I am hopelessly possessed

Alas, it's done, from where they dwell
My passions rise and they swell
To frenzied heights they heave and thrust,
And fill me with desire and lust

One lonely day has all but passed;
I really thought that I would last
But since I'm so in love with thee
A day alone is agony

SANTIAGO GONZALES With this third installment, Santiago Gonzales brings his "escape" story to its conclusion. We have been keen fans of this wonderfully-told story about how escape can be defined by different experiences. But the ending — which includes the casual slicing of another prisoner's neck — leaves us hesitant even about publishing it. The notion that the appropriate response to someone "talking shhh" or "verbally disrespecting" is to cut them forces us to conclude that the real reason this escape plan failed is because the writer is still imprisoned by his thinking and his conditioned reflex responses. Such thinking is not a reflection of freedom but of programmed expectations. If that makes us part of the haters, so be it. (Oh yes, we also hate to be the ones to have to correct Mr. Gonzales, but even if he had succeeded in physically escaping from Salinas Valley, where he wrote this piece, he would not have been, as he wrote, "the only prisoner in Salinas Valley State Prison's history to ever have escaped from this escape-proof prison..." Others have beaten him to that distinction...)

The Escape, Part III

Each day I explored that place, I discovered something new. Little by little all the bitterness, the anger, the rage, the pure raw hate I developed in prison in California, it all disappeared and I began to smile, and I felt hope. I found a reason to live and to go on. Because this was my home. This was my destiny. These were my friends. And I was home. I began expressing myself through art.

One day this Chicano asked me if I knew how to tattoo. I didn't but I said I did. I knew how to draw real good, and I figured tattooing ain't that much different. So I began tacking and I got better and better. The Chicano owned the tattoo motor and said he would provide the clean needles, batteries, ink and patterns. Some people got a steady hand and "that touch." I did excellent tattoo work and we split all the profits equally.

One of the piasas there was going to the federal prison and left me his Aiwa am/fm radios and it was the bomb. Although I'm Mexican, I love to rock out. They have some bomb-ass radio stations out in Arizona. There's this one Rock station out of Tucson that was my favorite, 96.1 KLPX, and every so often they would play a brand new CD of a latest release. I got to blast my ears with the entire CD of Metallica's "St. Anger" when it barely was released. I don't care what anybody says, that album rocks! But I listened to all kinds of music there. I eventually learned to speak Spanish, and I liked listening to the Spanish music. On Sundays I would listen to the campesino Vicente Fernandez' music. He's a famous singer from Mexico. I would also listen occasionally to the low rider oldies show, and at 9:30 at night D.J. Shy would get off on the freestyle mix. At Ten O' clock on Sunday nights was Pocos Pero Locos and sometimes they have some bomb-ass rap music by people or groups such as Lil' Rob, Kinto Sol, Night Owl and Capone, all kinds of bomb-ass Chicano rappers.

When I wasn't working (tattooing) I was busy playing Scrabble with my friend Rock or playing two hand Pinochle with my friend Jose. Rock was busted for money laundering and was one of the rich upper class socialite spoiled white boys. Jose was a Mexicano that was busted for being in the U.S without a visa.

The food they served at CCA was all that. At lunch time around noon you hear, "Llegua! Llegua!" which means come and get it in Spanish. Then we go and line it up against the wall out in the corridor. Lunch was always a hot meal, and no matter what, you always get beef — ground hamburger or big chunks of beef — but you always get meat with breakfast, lunch and dinner. Arizona is real big on beef. You should've seen my face my first Fourth of July there in 2002. Unbelievable! Unbelievable! The Alaskans along with the free staff kitchen workers staged the biggest Bar-B-Que ever. This should have been in the Guinness book of World Records.

Over six thousand inmates reside at CCA. That's a lot of people. The Alaskans did all the work. But on the Fourth of July, 2002, every inmate in that institution received on their tray for Fourth of July dinner, two Bar-B-Que hamburgers, Bar-B-Qued outdoors on a huge grill underneath the Arizona sun, two Ballpark Franks, hot off the grill, real home-made

potato salad, Hormel chili beans, hot dog buns, hamburger buns, ice cold orange drink, corn on the cob, and a pure white cotton napkin! As I ate my meal, I cried like a baby with each bite I took of my hamburger and hotdogs. I mean I really cried, shed tears, made noise crying because I remembered eating the same Bar-B-Que with my dad at home when I was younger and he was still alive. So I cried.

I cried, too, because it was so many years since I was free like this. Anyways, at dinner time same thing: "Llegua, llegua," which in Spanish means dinner time! I used to help on

serving the food. I was the clerk and I could hire myself to serve food, or stay out all night and watch TV if I want because the COs have a list of who the workers are. So actually I had my job as the clerk, then at dinner I helped serve. When they had chicken for dinner, we got all the leftover pieces of chicken. Most of the paisas worked on the line, so after dinner we would get a big pile of chicken. Then we would take it back in to the dorm and stick it in the microwave. You could make all kinds of different meals with the chicken.

I'll tell you what we did for Thanksgiving 2002. They had laundry mats in each different unit. We got to wash our clothes every day. They gave us laundry bags and we mark our bags, drop it in the bin, and it comes back washed in two hours. The dorms were big and each dorm had a cell with two people, an eight-man dorm with an extra bunk bed. Then another cell dorm with eight people upstairs and downstairs. All total there was around sixty-eight people per dorm. At night you were locked in your cell or dorm. There was no electric fence at all surrounding this prison. None. Just your basic two fences topped with razor wire, but you could get around that real easy, just buy a pair of wire cutters or tin snippers from the Alaskans and cut the fence.

Alaskans had access to everything — hacksaw blades, tin snips, wire cutters. I was having too much fun to think of escaping. Every three months I'd get a letter from my attorney saying that my case has been continued for another ninety days. I did find a way out of that place had I wanted to go, but I wasn't ready. I made friends with a lot of people and I did tattoo work on a lot of people. People loved my work. I remember one day this paisa came up to me and said that Diego wanted to talk to me. Diego was the Head Honcho of the border brothers from Sinaloa, Mexico. Didn't speak no English. I thought there was a problem. But Diego wanted me to fix a tattoo of an Aztec skull. Then I tattooed a big Aztec on the back of his arm with big feathers. It came out mean! I made a good friend there.

Sundays I'd go to Iglesia with the paisas. That's where I learned a lot of Spanish.

Going to court. Going to court was awesome. They got you ready for court at around eleven-thirty at night. You sat in a holding cell with around a couple hundred Mexicanos waiting to go to court. Slept til breakfast at four a.m. in the holding cell. Then they shackle you up and you exit the facility. Now that was bus! The first time I seen the bus they take us to court in I was impressed. It looked like a tour bus. Tinted windows, plush seats. They had two of them. One for Phoenix, one for Tucson court. I was taken to court in Tucson. The ride to Tucson was long. Two hours, and the scenery was spectacular — vast desert, endless cactus. We passed small communities, and an ostrich farm. Cotton farms. An old ancient cemetery.

I loved going to court. The court appointed me a paid attorney from the streets! After getting back to CCA from court, you'd get a hot lunch. I went to court a few times during the month of June in 2002. Monsoon season. I got to experience a real monsoon on the way back from court a few times. The sky was clear, and the sun was shining, but towards the east you could see a wall of dark clouds

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mixed in with red dust far away. Then it got bigger and bigger and bigger as it was fast approaching, until before you knew it there was a huge wall of red dust and dark clouds upon the whole city as far as they eye could see, strong winds. And the dust got into everything. Then you'd see small dust tornadoes, lightning, thunder then boom! All of a sudden it would start pouring down rain like nothing you can imagine. Lightning was frequent and booms of thunder! I loved the monsoons!

Well as I said, I did a lot of studying on my case. I used to go to the law library and read and read everything I could that pertained to my case to federal court. I decided not to escape but, to try and keep on catching cases in Arizona so I could stay there until the state of California reversed my conviction. The U.S. attorney prosecuting me was getting impatient and was demanding to go to trial. My attorney told me he couldn't hold them off any longer, so I asked him to tell the court I would like to fire him and represent myself. The court allowed me to, but told me the trial date would not be postponed so I could prepare. I said, "Yeah, whatever"... to myself, of course. I knew I could get at least another ninety days out of the court. Maybe by then I would hear from the court in California.

All I wanted was for the court of appeals to deny appeal. Then for the State Supreme court to deny review. That way I could file my own case in Federal Court! I couldn't file in Federal Court unless all my state appeal routes were exhausted! But California was just as conniving and evil as me! The state of California knew what I was doing holding myself hostage in Arizona until they denied my appeal and my petition for review in the Supreme Court, so they withheld denying my appeals until I was returned to Salinas Valley State Prison! Of course I cannot prove this, but I'm sure of it. I'd bet my life!

In fact, let me tell you this: on September 10, 2003, I arrived back to this hell hole, Salinas Valley State Prison. That very same day, Sept. 10, 2003, the state Supreme Court denied my final appeal and file stamped it Sept. 10, 2003. I received it, hand delivered to me that very same night as well. I have the proof! They made it a point to let me know "who's boss." So don't try and tell me that was a coincidence.

Anyways, it wasn't easy getting me back to California. The court did postpone my trial, but the prosecutor one day stood up in court and said, "Your honor, the Government is asking that this case be dismissed. Mr. Gonzales is manipulating the legal system. He seems to be an expert at manipulating the legal system. It would be in the interest of Justice that Mr. Gonzales be returned to State Prison system in California where he can serve his life sentence!" I was floored! I couldn't believe what he was saying. I didn't want to leave. I had to do something.

When I got back to my cell I did what I thought would get me new charges. I had been placed in the hole because the Attorney General of California contacted the U.S. Attorney in Arizona and told them I escaped. They put me in the hole and locked me down. So when I returned from court I said to myself, "I'll never go back to California." I used the phone in my cell, (they give you cell phones) and I called up the Federal Court House in Phoenix. I had my call diverted around the court house until I finally ended up connecting with an unsuspecting clerk who I told,

"I just exited the court house a few minutes ago and I planted a bomb in the courtroom that will explode in a half an hour." It as on the evening news that evening. The entire federal court house and surrounding buildings, banks, and businesses, were all evacuated. Court sessions were cancelled all that day. Million's of dollars were lost by businesses, banks, court cancellations, police and emergency response. I did some damage and they traced the call to me! As pissed off as they were, they still didn't charge me! They wanted my ass back in California something awful. For good measure, they locked me down even worse by denying me access to any razor, in case I tried to end my

life, or someone else's. But, I foreseen that and I kept half a brand new razor blade in my mouth at all times, "just in case." This was "just in case."

I swore an oath I would never go back to California. I meant to keep it. My plan was to get on the plane, cooperate, until that plane was up in the sky and then use the razor to cut the neck of the person closest to me. But, cut, cut and keep cutting until the U.S. Marshal put a stop to it, make certain I get busted and charged! But that didn't work out as planned either. I did cut someone's neck but it happened on the bus, not on the plane. This guy was talking smack to me. I didn't say nothing back, I ain't into all that cell soldier B.S. When he got on the bus he still verbally disrespected me. Then he sat a couple of rows ahead of me, essentially turned his back to me. I got up, walked over, slid the razor blade across his neck like a credit card in ATM Machine swiper. His mouth opened and his jaw dropped. I'll never forget the look on his face. I walked back to my seat. I could see the meat and tendons in the guy's neck, you know the white layer of skin and underneath the meat? Then he bled something fierce!

I got busted. The CO seen me. Still, there was no charges against me. We got to the airport, I watched them put the victim on the plane with his neck all bandaged. The Marshals said take me back to CCA. Two weeks later I got to fly all myself in Private Lear Jet. Plush. Leather seats, carpet. I got to see the Grand Canyon, the entire length of it. We flew to Helena, Montana. Then on to San Jose International Airport. The Marshalls picked me up from there and quietly and solemnly brought me back to Salinas Valley State Prison.

The day I arrived I got the Supreme Court's denial. I filed my petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus in the Northern District Federal Court in November 2003. In November 2003, I also got my brand new am/fm J-win boom box and bomb Koss cl 20 headphones my friends in Arizona bought for me along with a package.

My Habeas Corpus is to this day in May 2006 still pending in Federal Court. Thanks to Arizona, I had a rare opportunity to sit and review all the law books at my leisure and have all the time in the world. If my case gets reversed and I go back for new trial, I'm so ready! If I ever get out of prison, I'm going back to Arizona a civilian. I have a brand new life waiting for me. I had a once in a lifetime adventure I will never forget 'til the day I die. I will never forget CCA or the people there who will live in my heart and mind as long as I live. I'll never forget going to the yard and walking the yard with Billy who told me everything about his case... and he's out now. Or, the time I accidentally broke a porcelain sink and thought of how deadly the shards of broken porcelain would be, like cutting butter if inserted into human bone or flesh. I'll never forget the chair bashing riot we had when the Arizona Diamond Backs beat the N.Y. Yankees in the 2001 World Series played in Phoenix. I got to be part of that and it's tattooed on my chest "AZ D'Back's 2001."

I went to Arizona looking like a square. I came a totally different person. I have my entire left arm tattooed with Arizona ink that the Hawaiians and Alaskans sold to us. They got it from the hobby and craft shops they have. I guess I never really did come back to California after all. Because California didn't get back the same person that escaped in August 2003. My escape it seems was a success after all. I'm the only prisoner in Salinas Valley State Prison's history to ever have escaped from this escape-proof prison, and get away. There's not much left to tell except I got a lot of jealous losers hatin' on me.

Oh well, that's prison. Why is everyone hatin' on me, I'm not even here. I escaped.

SMILEY Summer is finally here and spring just left. Our lives change like the seasons and then we meet death. Love is gained and love is lost — sometimes we regret it and others we feel like we're better off. This young man who's writing from N.A. Chaderjian, one of Y-As institutions located in Stockton, expresses himself like a Mac Truck, not letting anyone stop him. He explains to his girl why he left, and it brings tears to our eyes. Not only is he unnaturally responsible, but utterly compassionate as he gives good reasons why he must say goodbye. We know a whole lot of us have been through a similar situation, so read on and see if this young man can offer your life some direction.

Broken Heart

[Praying]

Please help me
Please save me,
I'm going out of my mind
I think I'm crazy
Please help me
Please guide me
I can't contain this
Shhh that's inside me.

Verse #1

From the start, girl I was falling apart
Mentally dying from a broken heart,
So much pain hurting as if getting
Shot with a poisoned dart
Something that you gave me
Talked about wanting to have my baby
Girl you're hella crazy
I now need Jesus to save me.
But I refused to 'cause it
Will only make me weak
Just think a thug trying to
Be with God to seek
Knowledge and to get pointed
To the proper path
But I already went this
Route and I can't last
Now I'm in a corrupted zone,
Playing tricks with my dome
'Cause I can't walk away from the pain
And suffering it won't leave me alone
I try to run but it's like a lost dog just
Keeps on following me home.

Verse #2

[Talking to God]

I'm shedding tears by the cliff
I don't know what to do
I had gained then lost everything
But I refused to turn to you
I'm now at the edge of the cliff by
The ocean...I want to jump
But you keep telling me this aint
The way — get over this road bump
I tell you I can't complete this test,
I need to get away from all the stress
I went from one of the best
To being one into a lot of mess
Now I'm asking for a little request
Take all this shhh from my chest.
Please if you can...give me a vest,
Cause I don't want to die... like the rest
I ask to please put me back
Together cause I'm falling apart,
I don't know where I went wrong I
Think it was happening from the start
All because of a broken heart.

Why I Left You

There are a lot of reasons why
I had decided to break it off between me and you,
But don't get it twisted
None of them reasons are questioning my love for you.
I don't know if you can truly take
And accept what I'm about to say,
'Cause on a real tip
I love you even more 'till this very lonely day.
The reasons why I left you
Was cause you wanted to go to college and make a
better life,
As for me, deep down inside,
I felt that I was holding you back hurting me like a
knife.
The other reason was I missed your b-day for the last
four years
And was locked up during the prom,
I truly felt like I was a sucka
Having to relay messages and gifts through my mom.
Also you waited for me for four years
Then me getting sent to CYA for another four years,
I hate the fact
That I'm the one causing your beautiful eyes to drop
them tears.
Then mother suckers putting questions in your mind
About me and what I do,
Making you believe that I'm unfaithful and I'm shady
Plus being heartless now that aint true.
Am I wrong for making the choice that I made
Or am I truly right,
I told you my love is so strong it brightens your days
And even the darkest nights
I'm sorry I had to let you go
But trust it was the hardest thing to do since court,
Best believe I can never love another woman...
Will never be on that level no more
Now you understand why I left you,
And these reasons and my love is really true

CHRIS GRAJEDA This next writer is one of our favorite people here at The Beat. We originally met him in Alameda County Juvenile where he would put it down for us week in and week out, and though we disagreed with him most of the time, he made us at least attempt to understand his side of things. So even in disagreement, we enjoyed his company. Now, he finds himself in Preston (a California Youth Authority institution in Lone, CA) with 'little thoughts' that some of us can relate to. Looking around at all the ignorance taking place gets depressing, irritating, and even intolerable. We're glad Chris seems to at least be handling that ignorance around him in ways that won't put his freedom at risk on a worse level than it already is. He truly has grown as a writer and better yet as a person since we first met him. We got much love for you over here Chris, so knock that lil' time out and come see what's up with us. In the meantime keep us posted — we really wanna know the latest.

Little Thoughts

I sit back in YA and peep the game
Everything around me it's always the same
Everybody trying to earn stripes and get the fame
But most of these cats is hella lame

They want to catch time and not go home
But when they do they cry when they're alone
Me I'm wishin' I had a clone
To take my spot so I could go home

We got people who try to do good
We got people claimin' their hoods
We got people doin' what they should
But me I just try to keep it all good

These are YA games that I see everyday
I try not go feed into them and remain the same
So for all you people that has not made it up here yet
This shh ain't no game
Do your time go home and stay...

Pain

I guess you can call me a black child — a victim to
infliction of pain
Constantly struggling with “insanity,” relentless efforts of
making crazy negotiations with my half gone brain
Having shoot outs and turf wars with “sane” but “Mr. no
Name”
Refuse to cry — tears no longer run down his eyes.
He has been hardened by the manufacturing hand of this
cold world
In which this story has turned his tears into internal ice
picks,
Poisoned with piss and feces, digging into the gold mines
of his flesh
Torturing and bringing hell to the front doors of the heaven
of his heart
that resides in his chest
Seeking to have me stranded on Pain Ave./ cross street,
“Emotional Mess”
But I refuse to stay wet
This struggle is the cloth that soaks up the pain
Of this heart that resides in this chest
And like Moms said,
“Life is a test and when you through struggling, Baby,
That's when you rest in peace... that's not a guarantee
Seek guidance in God or your heart will continue to bleed
You see this life you live is a life of pain
Even nature cries rain, continually cleansing the
murderous sins of the Biblical Cain
And even though he lies six feet deep, his sins we continue
to reap
Caught up with following the path that was paved by a dead
man's feet”

Mama, I want to do right, but I'm caught up with doing so
wrong
Has my blood been contaminated before birth
Prematurely implemented as an outlaw associated with
evil-doers of this Earth
Stamped certified loser and wrongdoer
Never had a chance to step into the domain of right
Life has always been a fight
You'll never understand half the shhh that goes on in the
mind of this young life
But I'm go' continue to strive
Forget the cost, born boss
I'll never follow the ways of a secret society seeking to
make me a mental slave
I'm go outshine them all before I fall
It may be rainy right now, but the sun will continue to
shine with time

I can't lie, I'm still sitting here lonely as ever writing y'all
this piece

E-MONEY

It's been too long since we've had a
contribution from one of the most prolific
and profound longtime Beat Without writers, Eric Phillips — E-Money!
Formerly imprisoned by the CDC, Eric paroled and joined us here at
The Beat. Unfortunately, his freedom was cut short when he was
charged with a new offense, which he is now in trial fighting against.
In this piece, he wonders if the pain of an impoverished and deprived
childhood has marked him forever. But that dark question leads him
back to his faith in God and the light that faith provides. With our best
wishes for a successful outcome to his jury trial, Eric writes us from the
San Francisco County Jail.

Time has delivered me the burden of misery and destiny
currently hold me captive
In an emotional state called pain
Hell is at my front door and these silent cries of mine isn't
enough to put out its fire
Torture is squeezing the life out of my heart, and
sometimes I wonder —
Do it hurt more being dead or alive

Sometimes I feel like a dead man walking because this
ain't living
Patience of being incarcerated is eating me up inside and
sometimes I wonder —
Is insanity the price of the daily undergoing a life-
threatening operation
That's not looking too promising
Freedom is the transplant this dying soul is looking for
But society says she hate me
With all this jealousy and hate, it makes me wonder —
Who loves me
I live my life every day awaiting to be judged by twelve
And even though I know it's only One that can really judge
me
I find it impossible to murder the thought of what's going
to be
My life's outcome
I wish upon an eternal peace, but I know in order to
achieve this
I must first learn the definition of hurt and pain
I must be God's child because living this life
Got me seeing things other people isn't seeing

If God's my protector, why do I worry
If faith is the things hoped for and the substance unseen
Why am I finding difficulty in adopting its truth
Deep down I know it's going to be all right
But still I can't get over the devil and his stories of pain
and misery
It's like I'm stuck in the middle of heaven and hell
A residence where warriors reside
Being forged into a black diamond from the earthly
substance I endure
God is my armor, and yet I know this:
If He's with me, why worry about who's against me?

Sometimes I feel like a dead man walking because this ain't living

JEREMY TOWNER

Sins are very tricky
things. Most often our
country sins by trying to correct someone else's sin. Is that right? Who
should be the judge as to who's right and who's wrong? Humans have
flaws so they don't have the capacity to be totally objective when it
comes to making decisions. How then, can anyone with a heartbeat point
out another's sins. Well, this week, Jeremy, who's writing from California
State Prison in Corcoran, CA tackles sin in his poem and in doing so is
sort of all out challenging sin. Very clever idea for a poem and the poem
makes this idea its own. Outstanding, keep 'em coming Jeremy...

Resistin' Sin

Oh what hast thou done
You savage beast
To feed prey on my sin
As kings grand feast
You have battered my thoughts
With lust filled dreams

Yet awake, they are not what they seem
I have listened to your whispers
I have let myself be steered
I sought you as a friend
When you are to be feared
Such a power you have
The power to stray
To hold of innocence imagination
And mold it like clay
What do you make
Of the innocence of me
A powerful sinner
Created of your insanity
Be away with your words
Your trickery and lies
For now your day has come
This life I will not die.

DALTON COLLINS

This next writer is amazing in that he gives lessons through his experiences with incarceration by telling stories about what goes on in there. The things he describes in 'Wake Up Call' are horrendous and make us cringe at the fact that though so many things have advanced in this country, the way we deal with people who break the law is still so ancient. Locking people up in these draconian like facilities with the hopes that they won't continue breaking laws is absurd and obviously isn't working, which only leads us to believe that the system doesn't want itself to work because then the system would be losing profit. Makes a whole lot of sense. But that doesn't solve the problem of guards acting like slave masters or that there are people out here getting away with a lot worse because they have a little bit of money. Well, as you can see this great writer brought up a lot for us here at The Beat and has a lot of great things to say. So, with that said please read on and learn from Dalton who writes to us from Texas' Department of Corrections in Iowa Park, Texas.

The Dissolution Of An Illusion

The siren song of chemical bliss,
Pain of poverty numbered at the point of perception
Beguiling voices
Leading one down the path to selfish indulgence
Solipsism of the moment
A denial of ignorance... reflected
In the self satisfaction that compromises
My will — my purpose
Relationships reduced to opportunist associations
Between atoms
Bent on mutually assured destruction
The human cost tallied at the graveside
Of our humanity

Relationships reduced to opportunist associations Between atoms Bent on mutually assured destruction

Wake Up Call

Jarred from my sleep; early pre-dawn hours.
Listening for a moment to the shouting, I'm able
To piece together what happened.
The prisoner was awoken and ordered to stand outside
While his cell was "tossed"; his anger and indignation rising
Whilst he watches his meager belongings contemptuously
thrown about:
Pictures strewn on the floor; papers scattered,
Stepped on; bed sheets on the dirty floor,
Boot prints on everything
Refusing to enter his cell he pleads to see a supervising
guard.
He is handcuffed and placed in a caged room; here comes a
lieutenant:
Billy Ray... Bubba Ray... I forget. I recognized though
The drawl, florid red face and neck,
A paunch on a too young body
"What the hell is wrong with you, boy?" he bellows. "Git your
ass in that cell 'fore I suit up a team on you... I don't give
a damn about your pictures!" in response to the prisoners
protestations.
The prisoner asks to see the captain – Billy Ray leaves.
Most of the cell block is not awake; a cacophony of voices:
"What's going on, what's all the noise!"
"Hey I'm tryna' sleep!" called out in a steady, confused,
irritated stream.
Boots thundering down the hall; here comes the extraction
team:
Padded suits, helmets, truncheons, shield
Gas masks, camera... six of them in all
There's Billy Ray again; "Offender number xxx (none of us
have names here) you have 15 seconds to comply with my
order to submit to restraints and obey my order to enter
your cell or a chemical agent and force will be used against
you," he bellows.
I think to myself, "The little kid is already in cuffs... locked
in the cage..."
By now a chorus of obscenities;
Mostly empty threats, hurled at the guards
Some men, howling like loons, banging bars with cups
Providing background for the brutal ballet about to begin
15 seconds pass.... Psshsshsh!
The gas canister is discharged; stinging, choking chemical
Is indiscriminant, choking everyone in the vicinity.
Billy Ray has donned a gas mask

The prisoner is coughing and gagging
Quietly I watch; my usual peculiar air of detachment;
The chemical agent tickling my nostrils
Billy Ray bellows, his voice sounding somewhat "Darth
Vader-esque"
Through the mask, "offender number xxx, you have 15
seconds to comply with my order to submit to restraints
and obey my order to enter your cell or a chemical agent and
force will be used against you!"
With well-rehearsed efficiency.
I think to myself... "He's locked in a cage."
Fifteen seconds pass.... Psshsshsh!
Another canister is discharged, the air now thick with it.
Billy Ray signals that the door be opened to the cage
A large man with a shield rushes in
Slamming the prisoner to the ground
Two more follow the first
There's grunting, the sound of boots and fists thudding into
flesh;
The prisoners face mashed into the unforgiving concrete
A knee in his back, one on his neck
The cacophony reaches a crescendo
The voices and words no longer discernable
The prisoner is drug out, lifted, and tossed into his cell
Hands and legs in restraints, metal biting
Into flesh — blood on his mother's photo
His sister's head torn off a picture
The handcuffs are removed, leg irons removed
The team exits the demolished cell;
Door slamming with a vengeance
A nurse arrives, gas mask on, asking the prisoner if he is
suffering
Any injuries for which he needs treatment
Merely a formality; for the camera record
He is of course expected to say "no"
I cannot see him but I imagine him:
Standing there, bloodied face, staring incredulously
At the porcine abomination before him; shaking
With barley controlled rage.
He says nothing. The noise persists but is ebbing:
Impotent rage spent, collective anger subsiding
Spirits wounded, the ending predictable
Billy Ray is standing behind the nurse leering through the
mask;
The extraction team retreating down the hall, exchanging,
"Hi-fives" at their "victory," laughing raucously...
Quietly, I return to my bunk, eyes stinging
I lie down, thinking ... hating.

Dear Beat Within

Greetings from the gualaq archipelago! Received Vol. 11.16 of The Beat Within yesterday... Want to express my sincerest gratitude for yet another issue — doubly so as I see The Beat Within saw fit to include the poetry (and letter) I submitted. It is a privilege and I am grateful.

I would once again ask that you consider for print a poetry submission. The poem, "Wake Up Call" is a little long — hope it poses no problem space-wise.

If allowed I'd like to share with the young readers (particularly those not yet in the adult system) a bit of experience — I hope it will be sobering to... at least some.

In 1991 I killed a man. The reasons why aren't nearly as important as the fact that in so doing I permanently altered, disrupted and destroyed not only the victim's life and the life of HIS family; but 3 years later; when this crime caught up with me, my life and my family's life were similarly altered... permanently. I was convicted and sentenced to life in prison. Since my incarceration (1995) I have been convicted and sentenced for 2 additional crimes; committed while in custody, receiving 2 aggravated 40-year sentences... to be served consecutively (stacked!); an additional consequence being that I am housed in the Texas equivalent of a SHU unit... Where I will remain, if Texas has their way, until I am very old or very dead. I will NEVER be able to hug my

JEREMY TOWNER Jeremy is one of those special Beat writers that we love hearing from — even if it's just to say what's up. He's been writing The Beat Within for years too! He first started sharing his work in The Beat within when he was in Santa Cruz County Juvenile Hall, today he is writing from the California State Prison in Corcoran, CA. And this week he writes about being a 'convicted man' and everything that comes along with it. For you youngsters, there's always someone with more struggles and hardships than you. So when you're sitting in that cell deciding whether you should fight your case or cop a plea, the best way to take you mind off it is by picking up a Beat and reading this incredible section. It's people like

Convicted Man

I am a convicted man
Sentenced to a life without
Abandoned within these cold stone walls
Filled with confusion and doubt
Tears so sincere of what I fear
Can you hear?
My silent screams for help....
Can you feel my suffering?
My time of trials...
Pain and torment...
The struggles of my conscience
The decisions I've made
Are being paid
In due... in due...
Time drifting on like a dead tree
Ripped away from the forest
To drift forever in the sea
It is not the world
But me... alone
Solitude in flesh
The holder of the keys to my fate
Too late...
The door just out of reach
My freedom giving freely
Taken just as easy
Was it hard for the world
To put me away?
Everyday... of my life?
They couldn't teach me about honor
About faith and wisdom
I lacked were they slacked
Now look were I'm at
I lived I tried
It wasn't enough
I only did what I only can
And look at me
A convicted man...

DALTON COLLINS (CONT.)

mother's neck, see my lil' girl grow up, see my nieces and nephews play sports — and so on...

I didn't lay this out to stroke anyone for sympathy; I'm certainly NOT 'chest beating'... in fact, this is about YOU! How so? Life for me now is being witness — on a daily basis — to grown men being reduced to infantile shadows of human life forms, seeing psych patients wallowing in shhh; seeing the same faces; hearing the same worn out lies and 'war stories', seeing the same abuses of power... all of this and much worse. This 'life' could easily become YOUR life.

There are obstacles and material conditions of life much worse than those you currently face... this is but a glimpse of what could be. However, as long as you're free you have the ability to prepare, plan and execute those plans; to engage in life's struggles... the further behind the wire you get the ore limited are your options and abilities until you reach the conditions described above and in these accompanying poems.

I implore you... don't let this become YOUR life. Learn to respect freedom (and all that comes with it; good and bad)... Choose life! Once again, my sincerest thanks to 'The Beat Within' for making this platform of sharing and outreach possible.

DRIFTER Not too long ago we had a topic that asked you to imagine yourself as a bullet and tell us a story. Well, one of our BWO writers, who was once a primetime writer in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall, stepped up big with a poetic perspective of what life as a bullet would be like. He gives us amazing visuals as he even sees other bullets flying in his direction — all out warfare. Not only that but his words, like a bullet, are ruthless and have no thoughts other than reaching its destination. He's writing to us from the CDC in Tracy, CA where he's incarcerated. And his imagination is on a level all its own. We're so grateful to have been able to be taken on a journey through this young man's mind and we're sure he has plenty more where that came from.

Who?

Who pulled the triggers?
I'm flying piercing through the air as fast as I can.
I don't see anything to my sides — only keep focus on my target.
What is my target I ask myself, I don't know.
I'm drifting full force hurting anyone in my way.
Who pulled the triggers?
Nothing is stopping me.
I'm eager to get to where I'm headed.
It don't matter, I'm getting tired.
My mom puts her hand to block my path.
Forget that.
She ain't going to.
So I pick up more speed and rip through her palm
Leaving blood, tears and pain behind me.
The hell with it.
She shouldn't have gotten in the way.
I don't know my destination,
But I'm getting near.
I can feel the fire in me get satisfaction.
Other bullets are flying with me.
Some with me.
Some against me.
We all got different, yet very similar targets.
Few of us know them!
See a bullet reach his goal.
He got there.
Finally, yet so soon.
The mark was death.
It crashed and exploded.
Who pulled the trigger?
Forget that!
Ain't going out like that.
I know I'm not going to end that way.
No one has told me. I just know who says so — I do.
Some bullets have come a long way
Ripping and tearin' the walls that try to stop them.
Menace and danger is the only outcome of any conflict.
Rain or shine the trance of this numbness is giving me
The cold blood to survive my trip.
Who pulled it?

Life is what we make of it and as long as we have a life to make anything of it, we should do our best to live as if we are given a second chance at doing what is right. Only then will we redeem ourselves of our past mistakes or unfinished business.

check out the rest of Frank Serrano's BWO Ed Note Contest entry piece on page 44

